

## **“MAJOR THEMES FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS: MALACHI.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**September 16, 2012, 6:00PM**

**Sermon Texts: Malachi 2:10-16**

### **Introduction.**

We have been away from Malachi for a month now. Let me remind us of the reasons I decided to slow down and preach through Malachi. It's a mirror of our age, it's so modern, so contemporary. This is us. We are living in a time of the re-paganization of our worship and our culture. Our culture is described as post-modern and post-Christian.

When a person or a nation loses the fear of God, before long anything and everything goes. There's no shame, no guilt, no taboos. As goes our worship, so goes our lives and our culture. We worship what we love and if that isn't God then it's idolatry and idolatry destroys a person and a nation.

We are living in a time similar to the people in Malachi's time. God sent Malachi, whose name means messenger, to confront His people who were being unfaithful in four major areas of life: unfaithful in worship; led by unfaithful clergy who trivialized the people's offerings and trivialized the truth; they were being unfaithful in their relationships, especially their marriages; and they were being unfaithful in their financial giving to God's work.

### **Judah has profaned the covenant of God in three ways.**

This evening in our text Malachi confronts the people for their unfaithfulness in the most fundamental and important of all human relationships, marriage. He calls out their faithlessness, their treacherous and deceitful ways in three areas.

#### ***Breaking trust in relationships, Malachi 2:10.***

He begins with their relationships in general and their tendency to disregard or break promises or agreements or commitments in business or social or family matters.

God does not want us to be faithless, to break our word, to deal treacherously with each other. A failure to keep trust is a major failure. We do it too often with our children or with our parents or friends, at home, at work, at church.

The very fabric of a community depends on faithfulness and trustworthiness, whether between parents and children, husbands and wives, employers and employees, governments and their citizens. Do each of us keep our word and our commitments?

***Three reasons*** are given for keeping faith, for not being faithless.

First, God is our Father. We are part of His family and when we break faith we bring shame on the family, on the family name, on our Father. These are our own brothers and sisters we are breaking faith with. This is personal.

Second, God is our creator. We are accountable to our maker. If we break covenant we are saying we don't acknowledge God as our God. I can be selfish and self-centered because I am my own god, I do what I want.

Third, we profane the covenant when we break faith. God made a covenant in Abraham to be our God and to bless us as His people. He promised to love us and take care of us. He would do everything for us. He kept His end, we must do the same and love and obey Him and keep His law.

Breaking faith usually means we are trying to take care of ourselves or trying to make things work out better for ourselves or protect our interests. We are not trusting God to take care of us.

I have said many times that God is a covenant making and covenant keeping God. Malachi makes his appeal to the people based on who God is and what He has done. God is their Father by covenant and God has created them. He wasn't referring to the creation of all mankind, but to the creation of the nation of Israel into the people of God.

Covenant making and covenant keeping is at the core of community and of being able to maintain community. It's fundamental to holding the fabric of society together, to living together in peace. We see it when peace treaties are made and then broken.

### ***Married the daughter of a foreign god, Malachi 2:11-12.***

The second kind of faithlessness Malachi confronts is that of mixed marriages and this he calls an abomination, very strong language for a very great offense against God and His covenant.

Just to be sure we understand, the issue is not mixed marriage in terms of race. There's no objection in Scripture to interracial marriage. Moses had a foreign wife. Rahab was a Canaanite and a prostitute and she married an Israelite in the line of Jesus. Same with Boaz who married Ruth, a Moabites and was also in the line of Jesus.

The issue is stated clearly, Judah had married the daughter of a foreign god (Malachi 2:11).

If we say that we love God with all our mind, soul, heart and strength, and then bind ourselves in the most intimate of all human relationships to an unbeliever, our actions don't match our words. Judah has done this and has profaned the holiness of the Lord. Judah has mixed holiness and unholiness.

It was apostasy from the faith that had led to the exile in the first place and now they were putting themselves at risk again. A mixed faith marriage will lead to compromise by one or the other.

This was forbidden by God both in the OT and in the NT.

**Deuteronomy 7:3-4** You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

**II Corinthians 7:14-16** Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God ...

Paul asks five rhetorical questions to drive home God's wisdom and will. What can holiness have to do with unholiness?

There are two dangers in an unequally yoked marriage, constant conflict and strife and disagreement; or compromise and turning away from God.

**Nehemiah 13:26** Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. 27 Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

Whoever does not follow God is an idolater. If they don't worship the one true God then they worship something else of their own making and this is an abomination to God. There is grave danger in being cut off from God, of falling out of relationship with Him for the sake of an unholy relationship.

The text is not saying that unbelievers in these marriages never convert. It can happen. We should live in a manner that helps that happen.

And we know from the NT that if someone is in such a relationship, they shouldn't bail out (see I Corinthians 7:12-13).

What the text is saying to us today is if the choice is still before us, then we must never marry someone who does not love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all their heart. To make this commitment is to give the best hope for a peaceful and satisfying marriage relationship. Marriage is hard enough without at least starting out on the same page on the one issue that matters the most.

Please don't ask me to marry your daughter or son to a person who's not a follower of Jesus, who's not a practicing Christian. I have been asked two or three times in my ministry and it's very painful to have to deny their request.

I cannot perform the wedding ceremony of one of my own sons if he chooses to marry a non-Christian. It's contrary to the Word of God and it's contrary to wisdom, and I am a man under authority.

In the wise words of one Christian:

"The Christian who chooses to marry a non-Christian in the hope that their spouse will be converted is committing not one sin but many. They are gambling with God, denying the authority of the Bible as his Word, creating an unnecessary division in the unity of the church ... and guaranteeing that the marriage will start off on the wrong foot, with man and wife divided where they should be most firmly united" (John Blanchard, *Major Points from the Minor Prophets*, p. 263).

***Broken faith with the wife of their youth, Malachi 2:13-16.***

Several of you took a vow or oath of loyalty to the United States when you became a naturalized citizen. But you can reverse that commitment and go back to your country of origin. It is no sin to do that.

Some of you took an oath in the military and you vowed to obey your commanding officers, but that was only while you were in active duty.

No human commitment is more serious or solemn or has more far-reaching ramifications as marriage. None is so permanent, in all situations, better or worse, sickness or health, poverty or riches, until death.

Today many people see marriage just as a formality, or a legal contract at most, that can be broken at any time for any reason. Marriage is not just a legal contract, it's a covenant entered into with vows before God, to which God is witness (Mal. 2:14).

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

God has made them one. What God has put together let no man put asunder.

***Malachi gives three reasons why God hates divorce and why it ought not to be done.***

First, marriage is a covenant. A covenantal commitment is meant to be a rock, not sand. Marriage was created and designed by God to be solid, permanent, as unchanging as the God who first created and initiated covenants. Covenants are grounded in the character and nature of God Himself. He cannot be unfaithful.

Second, our marriage covenant is made before God, with God as our witness. This is not just a human commitment based on human feelings or human intentions. God is not passive in this. God is our witness, it's recorded in heaven. It has a divine seal set upon it. What God has joined together, let no man dare put asunder.

Third, in the simplest and clearest and most direct terms possible, God hates divorce, so says the God of Israel. Divorce is a contradiction to the character of our Father God in two ways. It contradicts the character and nature of God's husband-like relationship to Israel. He would never break faith in this way. God will never nullify His marriage to His elect. Israel is His wife.

And it contradicts the character and nature of Jesus in His relationship with His bride, the Church. Jesus will never turn His back on His beloved Bride.

Marriage is a picture or illustration of the most beautiful of all spiritual blessings, the relationship Christ has with His bride, the church. Divorce is a lie about the most beautiful truth. Christ would never divorce His bride, no matter how bad things get. So divorce is a picture of apostasy, of us rejecting Christ.

In the words of one writer: "Confining marriage to the limits of the community of faith and remaining faithful within marriage are crucial in the Bible because marriage is the principal

metaphor for the relationship of Christ and his church” (Iain Duguid, quoted in John Blanchard, *Major Points from the Minor Prophets*, p. 264).

### **Application and conclusion.**

Did I not say Malachi was modern, contemporary and relevant? We live in a treacherous age, in an unfaithful age, in a casual throw away culture. We should fight for marriage and defend it at all costs. God will bless these efforts.

God is the one who created and designed marriage, it’s His making, His doing. He has given it to all mankind as a gift. When we say marriage is a basic human right we have to ask where did that right come from? What about so called gay marriage, is it a right? What if our government says so?

It’s not OK because we do not have the right to redefine marriage from how God created and defined it. God made marriage for one man and one woman. That is the God given right, for a man and a woman to marry. That’s God’s definition and we do not have a right to change that. To do so is an abomination to God, contrary to His Word and will and an invitation for disaster and judgment on ourselves and on any nation that approves of such an abomination (Romans 1:32).

None of our marriages are perfect, every one of them is broken and flawed in some way. All of us are sinners and when two sinners get married there’s lots of sin. Marriage by its very design brings out the worst in us. That’s why there are vows, why a permanent covenant is made, so that when the trouble and heartache come, and they will, we are bound to stick it out and work it out under God’s mercy and grace. We must humble ourselves before God and throw ourselves on His mercy and confess and repent and He will work things out.

Let’s guard ourselves, take heed, pay careful attention, take our marriages seriously.

For the sin of broken trust in relationships or the sin of a mixed marriage with an unbeliever or the sin of divorce there’s one solution. Confess it before God as sin and repent and ask for His mercy and forgiveness. And then commit yourself to walk faithfully with God in the midst of the relationship you are in. Don’t whitewash it or make excuses for it, call it what it is, humble yourself and be honest before God and He will forgive your sin when you call it sin.

**Exodus 34:6-8** “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, ....”