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SERMON TITLE: Shining Brightly on Judgment Day
SCRIPTURE: Malachi 3:13-4:3
DATE: October 28, 2018
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Why Give? Series.

There are lots of things that tell you the truth.

- Your jeans will tell you the truth about your weight.
- Your credit card company will tell you the truth about your expenditures.
- Your electric company will tell you the truth if you do not pay your bill.
- Your boss will tell you the truth if you do not show up for work or live up to the requirements of the job.

So why do we cringe when God or God's representatives tell us the truth?

At the end of his book, Malachi tells us *THE WHY* of what he has been saying. He tells us because he wants us to shine brightly on Judgment Day.

You've heard of Judgment Day? I can remember my mom's dislike for the old-time itinerant preachers who would come through her country town when she was young and give those "fiery sermons" about judgment day.

She said *you hear one of those sermons and you never need to hear one again!*

But I disagree. Malachi gives a gift. He reshapes and revives a people who have forgotten God so that they can gain the benefits of returning to God.

That's not just *them*, for then, but also *us*—for now.

Humans have a tendency to forget God. It's like the tendency to eat fast food or spend too much money or neglect your investments or not study for a test. It's easy to slide.

So Malachi reminded them: you must invest in God *first* because God is your greatest asset.

Picture this—church people sitting around together talking. They love being together but sometimes are not quite sure they can stick with all this faith stuff. The questions come up:

What's the use of serving God?

What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord that we are sorry for our sins?

Things were rough for them. Money was tight. Many were probably paying child support because of their high rate of divorce. Bills were high and people were neglecting their tithes. They couldn't get ahead. As a result, the church had to lay off its ministers and the church had few resources to help people in need. It was as if they had holes in their pockets.

What's the use of serving God?

What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord that we are sorry for our sins?

The Lord heard, because as we know, the Lord is near; God is right here and listens to you and me. Malachi tells us the conversation.

The LORD: "You have said terrible things about me."

The PEOPLE: "What do you mean? What have we said against you?"

The LORD: "You have said, *what's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord that we are sorry for our sins? From now on we will call the arrogant blessed. For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them suffer no harm.*"

But then the people who revered the Lord got together one evening to pray. They spoke with each other. They read Scripture to encourage each other. They prayed for one of them whom they loved. This was not unusual for these people.

Others prayed from their homes and made calls and visits and opened their homes. They sent food to the poor and gifts for the elderly and notes to the discouraged. They reached out a hand to neglected children and sacrificed in many ways.

The LORD listened and took note of them.

In the LORD's presence, a book of remembrance was written to record the names of those who revered him and always thought about the honor of his name. Why?

The actions of these people are precious to God.

The LORD: “They shall be mine, my special possession on the day that I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their obedient children.”

Then, **all of them will see the difference between the righteous and the wicked.**

That’s an interesting, even amazing result. Do you want to understand clearly why it is your greatest asset to believe in God?

In Malachi’s day, the people who seemed to have it made seemed also to have no notion of God and no constraints in life. You know those people, too. They make up their own rules; don’t want to go to church; marry whoever they want or don’t marry at all; and have no sense of obligation to God’s house, the poor, or the alien. That’s how Malachi defined them.

The Bible calls them “wicked.” We aren’t so definitive, but let’s just say they are the people who make you mad. You see them all the time.

They cheat others to fill their own pockets. They lie to get more. God has no hold on their hearts. They don’t feel guilty. They are not obligated to other people and have few morals. They think highly of themselves and their own ideas and ignore God. They arrogantly speak and act against God but they never seem to get called on the carpet. Life seems to go well for them and they prosper.

Those who try to live a good Christian life don’t seem to have any special advantage.

We do not always see the gain, but God assures you and me that it is there.

Our gain is not small—it is huge. It is outstanding and lasting. It is exceedingly valuable. It is so great that it is worth every bit of suffering and sacrifice that we experience in this life. There is nothing to compare to what is coming to us from God.

Think of your most precious possession or greatest experience. It makes you happy, but it absolutely is tiny in the light of what God has in store for you because you honor Him by living out your faith.

“See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble,” God says. All evil will be eliminated. Can you imagine what it would be like if there were no murders or abandonment or lies or bombs or hurricanes or thievery? All of that is destroyed?

But you, who revere God, will be saved. Not only that, you will be in charge, fully prepared for the task.

God proclaims, “The Sun of Righteousness shall rise, with healing for you.” (Malachi 4:2) That’s Jesus, the light of the

world, the bringer of life, the glory of God, the one who heals all the hurts and suffering that humanity inflicts upon itself. He will lift you up to life forever—**without struggle!**

He will destroy all the bad in the world and **you will triumph!** God cares enough to tell you this ahead of time.

So keep doing your good works. Stay faithful to God’s commands. Offer your first and best. Press on into giving your tithe because every gift you give comes back to you a hundredfold and more.

Malachi tells us the truth. Sometimes the truth is hard to hear because he says to God’s people—step up; don’t quit; stay faithful; give your best because God is your very best asset. There is great gain coming for you, even here in this life:

“Give your tithe and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour down for you an overflowing blessing here and now—and you will be a land of delight.” (3:10-12) And then in the future, “all evil shall be overcome forever, and you will go free, leaping for joy. (4:3)

You cannot always see clearly what your sacrifices, your sharing, serving, and your giving has done for others in bringing them to the Lord; in opening the doors of heaven for someone; in blessing God, in bringing God’s truth. But one day all that will be clear to you. Jesus said,

“I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property— along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30)

Malachi says this is the way to shine brightly on judgment day. Are you “keeping on keeping on” in a lifestyle of faithful giving and living? You will be rewarded greatly!

AMEN