

Real Food **Daily Bible Reading Notes**

July 2021 – Luke 13-24 & Malachi



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How to use these Bible Reading Notes:

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you feed on God's word a little and often and allow it to change your life. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever you left off – it doesn't matter if it's the wrong date.

Here are some tips on how to get the most out of this:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
Maybe set an alarm on your phone to remind you each day.
2. Pray. Ask God to help you understand what he says.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the Bible passage (use a good translation of the Bible like the NIV).
 - **'Read'** tells you which verses to read.
 - **'Apply'** shows how it affects you.
 - **'Pray'** suggests ways to talk to God about it.
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for a chance to share with someone what God has been saying to you.

These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets.

*Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'Add Subject →
Biblical prayers & devotions → Real Food.'*

If you have any problems, email info@prayermate.net.

Who then can be saved?

Who is right with God? And how? Jesus turns people's expectations and assumptions about this upside-down.

In this section of Luke, Israel's religious leaders are sure they're right with God, and they're constantly offended by Jesus' statements that they may not really be part of God's people. According to Jesus, when the kingdom comes (very soon!), they won't even be part of it!

The confusion continues when he arrives in Jerusalem, the capital city. His friends expect that he'll be crowned as their warrior king, ready to defeat Rome and restore Israel. But he's not acting that way.

Jesus turns upside-down their expectations of the kingdom, of what sin is, and of how to be rescued. As we see him do that, think about how you can be saved, and what a miracle it is!

Thursday 1st July

Sin in Israel

In the wake of a disaster that he and his friends are discussing, Jesus asks a very important question; 'Who does God call a sinner?' What do you think?

Read Luke 13v1-9

- Why were some people being judged as "sinners"? (v1-4)
- In fact, Jesus implies in v3&5 that everyone is sinful. What does he say is the solution?

Jesus then tells a story about a fig tree. In this story, the fig tree represents God's nation, and it's not fruitful.

- Given what Jesus has just been telling people, why do you think he says the fig tree isn't fruitful? What is he implying about God's people?

Read Luke 13v10-17

- In this interaction with a disabled woman, how does the religious leader show that he hasn't understood God's rules properly?
- What should he be concerned about?

Apply

- Who does God call a sinner? Does that surprise you?

Repentance involves a change of heart attitude, not just a change in behaviour.

- How can you live a life of real repentance today?

Pray

Thank God that Jesus rescues everyone who turns to him from sin, no matter who we are.

Ask God to help you not rely on rules to keep God's law, but to experience heart change.

Friday 2nd July

The kingdom warning

What is Jesus king of? What is on offer for people in his kingdom? Imagine a tiny mustard seed, and a big ball of dough!

Read Luke 13v18-35

In verses 18-21, Jesus uses two pictures to describe his kingdom.

- What impression of the kingdom do you get from them?

In verses 22-30, Jesus gives a warning about people who think they're in the kingdom but aren't...

- What have they wrongly assumed?
- What's the difference between religion that goes through the motions, and true faith?

Verses 31-32 gives a look forward to why Jesus is really going to Jerusalem.

- Why is he pressing forward, despite the threat he faces?

In verses 34-35, Jesus gives quite a bleak picture of the city he's about to enter.

- How does he describe it?
- What does he long to do for it?

Apply

- Are there ways you're in danger of 'going through the motions' in your relationship with God?

Pray

Thank Jesus for coming to die for us, knowing that he was dying for people who were rejecting him.

Ask God to keep you trusting in him and participating in his kingdom.

Saturday 3rd July

A party invitation for Jesus

Jesus goes to a party at a Pharisee's house, and quickly gets into trouble for asking a difficult question. But what he sees of these religious leaders' behaviour tells him more than just that they're bad hosts...

Read Luke 14v1-14

- In v 1-6, what has Jesus picked up on about the Pharisees' view of the sabbath? (the sabbath was the Jewish day of rest, every Saturday)? What's wrong with their attitude?
- Jesus notices that at this party, everyone wants to be the best (v 7). In v 7-11, what does Jesus advise for better party behaviour?
- In v 12-14, Jesus recommends inviting people who can't pay you back with invitations of their own. Why would this have been hard for the Pharisee(s) to hear?

Apply

- Jesus is about to contrast this unpleasant party host with God as the ultimate party thrower – how is God a kind and generous host?
- Do you act like the Pharisee party host, or are you generous without expecting return?

Pray

Thank God that he isn't like this Pharisee!

Ask to be more like Jesus in how you treat people, especially those that others despise.

Sunday 4th July

A party invitation from Jesus

Yesterday we saw Jesus making himself unpopular at a posh party. But today, we see why he cares so much about the Pharisee's unkind and selfish behaviour. God is himself a party thrower, but he's a little different...

Read Luke 14v15-24

- Someone at the Pharisee's party mentions God's party (aka the kingdom of God – verse 15). What do you think God's party in heaven will be like?
- In Jesus' story that he's telling, who do you think the people that make excuses represent in real life?
- If the people that were first invited don't come, who will come to the party in the end?

Apply

- Jesus says that the people we'd expect to be in God's kingdom party (the religious people, and those that know a bit about God) might not even turn up, because they think they've got better things going on! Does this challenge you?

Read Luke 14v25-35

- In contrast, what does it look like to follow Jesus into his kingdom?

Apply

- What do you need to say 'no' to today to follow Jesus?

Pray

Thank God for inviting you to his party!

Pray you'd be willing to count the cost of following Jesus.

Monday 5th July

Lost

In this passage, Jesus tells three stories about things that have got “lost”; a reaction to the Pharisees’ annoyance that Jesus hangs out with “lost” people.

Read Luke 15v1-32

- What do all the three “lost” stories have in common? Think about the person who’s lost something.
- What contrast is Jesus trying to draw with the Pharisees in verse 2?
- In the story about the sons, the Pharisees are represented by the older brother. Why is his reaction so irrational?
- If you’re more like the younger son, in that you’ve wandered from God and not wanted him as a father, how would this story give you hope?

Apply

The shepherd and the woman “rejoice” when they find their lost sheep/coin, but the father shows us most clearly how God reacts when his children return to him.

- How does God react when his children return to him?
- How does that make you feel?

Pray

Thank your heavenly father that while you were still far off, he ran to embrace you and threw a party!

Ask that you would not become like the older brother, resenting other sinners.

Tuesday 6th July

God and money

In this strange parable, Jesus uses a sinful example to show a useful lesson: investing in the future is much better than investing in the present!

Read Luke 16v1-18

In this story, a dishonest manager gets people to feel obligated to him, so he has somewhere to live. It's dishonest, but it's smart, and that's what Jesus focuses on.

- Have a look at v9 – Jesus is saying that shrewdness can actually help you with “eternal dwellings”! When Jesus talks about giving money to the poor, what is his ultimate hope for the giver and the receiver?
- Rather than investing in wealth on this earth (which fails), Jesus wants us to use our wealth to bring others to know him and be in heaven. Does this surprise you?

Apply

- Remind yourself of v13 – do you serve God with your money, or do you serve money itself?
- How can you use money “shrewdly” to plan for your heavenly future and that of others?

Pray

That you wouldn't be a lover of money but would be a lover of God.

Wednesday 7th July

A picture of hell

Yesterday Jesus questioned people's view and use of their money. Today, he shows what can happen when someone loves money more than God!

Read Luke 16v19-31

- Jesus continues to speak against loving money here. What might this unnamed rich man's excuse have been when he was invited to the heavenly banquet (remember the excuses in Luke 14)?
- Even in hell, this man doesn't want to be with God. What does he want more than anything (like he did when he was alive)?
- V27-31 – the rich man wants to send a poor Christian man from heaven (Lazarus) to warn his family members. What is Abraham's stark warning in reply?

Apply

- We often think the most important thing in life is money and comfort. What does this story show is most important?
- How are you challenged about your love of money?
- Who do we and others need to listen to, to be warned about the seriousness of hell?
- People in hell have not been convinced to repent, even by Jesus' resurrection from the dead – but some people around you might be! How does this passage challenge you to share your faith?

Pray

That you would speak into our society's love of money with the good news of Jesus that Lazarus trusted in.

Thursday 8th July

A picture of faith

What does real faith look like? In this passage, the disciples are worried that theirs isn't strong enough, so Jesus shows them what faith really is.

Read Luke 17v1-10

Jesus is warning the disciples about things that can cause us to stumble on our way to the kingdom, and the disciples are worried their faith won't stick it out.

- How does Jesus respond?
- What does faith look like in action, according to v7-10?

Read Luke 17v11-19

Here, Jesus commends somebody's faith, but it isn't who you'd expect!

- How can you tell that the tenth leper has real faith?
- What does real faith look like in action, according to this story?

Apply

Faith in action looks like servant-hearted obedience, and joyful praise.

- How can you live out your faith as a praise-filled servant today?

Pray

Thank God that faith doesn't need to be big to be saving faith, and that Jesus welcomes faith in anyone, no matter who they are.

Friday 9th July

Waiting for the kingdom

When will the kingdom come? Both the Pharisees and the disciples want to know the answer, but Jesus' response might not be what they hoped!

Read Luke 17v20-37

- Jesus says in v20-21 that the kingdom is invisible, but what *will* be seen when Jesus returns?
- What do the disciples not realise about the revelation of the kingdom (v25)?
- The disciples are longing for everyone in the world to find out that Jesus is the 'Messiah' (the chosen King). But Jesus says that will be a very scary time! What sort of things will happen when Jesus returns to judge?

Apply

- Do you think about Jesus coming as judge, or do you try to avoid it?
- How should we wait for his return?

Pray

For Jesus to return and end all suffering and evil forever!

That you wouldn't be fooled by people who claim to know when Jesus is coming back.

Saturday 10th July

The attitude of the prayerful

What happens when we pray? Have you ever wondered what's going on in God's throne room while he listens? How he feels about you? This passage gives us an inside look!

Read Luke 18v1-17

- Have a think about the first story. If a not very good judge listens to this widow because she's persistent, how much more will God listen to us?
- In the second story, what's the difference between the way these two men pray, and why?
- The third story doesn't seem like it's about prayer, but it's about our attitude to Jesus. Why does Jesus say we should be like little children in how we relate to him?

Apply

- Think about the persistence of the widow, the humility of the tax collector, and the neediness of the children. How would these characteristics transform your prayer life?

Pray

Put these attributes into action by bringing God the burdens of your heart and thank him for being a loving father that hears you!

Sunday 11th July

Who then can be saved?

Who then can be saved? This is the enduring question in Luke so far, as Jesus dismantles the religious leaders' expectations of who's in the kingdom. This passage contains two people at opposite ends of the spectrum...

Read Luke 18v18-30

- Why do you think Jesus answers the rich man's initial (very reasonable!) question with a question of his own?
- The commands that Jesus lists aren't the full set – he lists ones about loving your neighbour but misses out ones about loving God. Why do you think Jesus misses these ones out?
- What is the thing that this man loves more than God (and so breaks the first commandments)?
- V26-27 – why is it “impossible” for anyone to be saved without God's intervention?

Read Luke 18v31-43

- Why is this blind man so different from the rich man above?
- Although he doesn't look like a likely candidate, Jesus says that this man is in the kingdom – why?

Apply

- Are you more like the rich young man or the blind beggar?

In v 31-34 Jesus predicts his death and resurrection – this is what makes it possible for you and this blind beggar to be saved.

Pray

Ask God to help you cry to him for mercy rather than relying on yourself and your own goodness.

Monday 12th July

The repentant rich man

Jesus has been teaching that you cannot serve God and money, and that is about to be proved true in the next story. There are two paths, and you can't be on both!

Read Luke 19v1-10

In Biblical times, tax collectors were hated, because they not only took Jewish money to the Romans, but they also skimmed some off the top for themselves.

- Why is it a shock that Jesus would want to eat with Zacchaeus?
- Jesus responds very strongly to what Zacchaeus says with a declaration that he is in the kingdom! How does he know? (v8-9)
- From what we've read in Luke so far, how does Jesus feel about finding one of his "lost" people? (v10)

Read Luke 19v11-27

In this parable, Jesus shows what it looks like to want Jesus to be king – and it's nothing if not wholehearted!

- What's the warning for those who are not ready for Jesus to arrive in Jerusalem as king?

Apply

Living for Jesus means repentance (turning from going your way to going Jesus' way).

- Have you repented of your sin and committed to Jesus' new path? What do you need to turn away from to follow Jesus today?

Pray, asking Jesus to help you follow him and want him to be king.

Tuesday 13th July

Jesus' arrival

This passage is a turning point in Luke. You can tell, because the pace changes; we're given loads of details about Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. Look out for the references to Old Testament prophecies – they're important clues!

Read Luke 19v28-40

- What's unexpected about the way that Jesus chooses to arrive in Jerusalem?
- What do the disciples praise about Jesus when he rides into the city?
- If you have time, look up the passages referred to in the Old Testament. How do they help you understand why Jesus is going to the city?

1) Zechariah 9:9

2) 2 Kings 9:13

3) Psalm 118:26

Apply

- Do you see Jesus more as a triumphant warrior or as a servant king?
- Are you ready for Jesus to come again?

Pray

That you would be ready for Jesus' return, and that you would live a life of praise to him as king.

Wednesday 14th July

Jesus' anger

The first thing Jesus does in Jerusalem is go to the temple. And his reaction to the scene there could seem extreme, if it we didn't see the importance of Jesus' love going beyond Israel.

Read Luke 19v41-48

Jesus cares deeply about Jerusalem, and particularly about the temple, a place for all people to meet God. The temple courts, where he is in this scene, was a place for non-Jewish people to worship God.

- Why is Jesus weeping over Jerusalem?
- Why won't peace come to Jerusalem, according to Jesus?
- Why is he so angry with those who are selling in the temple courts? What and who are they disrupting?

Apply

- Jesus wanted Jerusalem to be a place for people of all nations to come and worship God, but it failed. Now that his people are the temple, how can you be part of that fulfilment? Who can you invite to meet God?

Pray

For another nation or people group close to your heart.

Thursday 15th July

Jesus is challenged (part I)

You don't cause a scene in the temple without attracting attention, and Jesus quickly has the religious leaders on his case after his arrival in Jerusalem. Sandwiched in between their confrontations of him is a parable told against them. But will they hear its warning?

Read Luke 20v1-26

- Have a look at the two times the Pharisees confront Jesus with a question (v2, v22). What do you think their motivations are?
- How do Jesus' answers expose their true heart?

In the parable of the tenants, Jesus shows that the previous guardians of God's kingdom haven't listened to those God has sent.

- What is Jesus trying to say to the Pharisees (and the people) with this parable?

Apply

- Do you ever assume that someone is in the kingdom because they look like they should be? How does this challenge your pride?

Pray

Praise God that even though sin is hatred of Jesus, you've been rescued by His death for you.

Pray against being swayed by religious pride instead of wholehearted faith.

Pray that you'd get to know God's character and promises better over the next couple of weeks.

Friday 16th July

Jesus is challenged (part II)

Another group of religious leaders join the fray this time, with another tricky theological question for Jesus, and Jesus responds in kind. But what exactly is it that the Sadducees are getting wrong?

Read Luke 20v27-44

- Although the Sadducees were just trying to trick Jesus into saying something controversial, he ends up making a full defence of the existence of the resurrection. Why do you think this is something he wants to argue?
- Jesus responds with a question of his own in v 41-44, pointing out that there are two “lords” mentioned by David. Who are the Sadducees supposed to conclude Jesus is?

Read 20v45-21v4

- What are some of the differences between the religious leaders and the widow of chapter 21?
- Why do you think Jesus holds her up as an example?

Apply

- Do you believe that Jesus will raise the dead?
- Think about people you find impressive – are they more like the religious leaders or the widow?

Pray

Pray that your faith will be wholehearted, just like the widow. Pray that your love would be like hers.

Saturday 17th July

Jesus' predictions

In this passage, Jesus is looking into the future. However, he's looking at more than one event, and it's a bit like someone looking into the distance at two villages. They look like they're one small town from a distance, but up close, they're far apart! See if you can tell them apart here.

Read Luke 21v5-38

Jesus' predictions here concern two major events: the destruction of the temple in 70AD, and his return. They are far apart, but Jesus is describing them together.

- If you have time, make a table with two columns. In the left hand column, write down everything in this passage that's to do with the destruction of the temple in 70AD. In the right hand column, write down everything that's to do with Jesus' return. (Don't worry if you're guessing. There is some overlap!)
- Jesus keeps warning his hearers to "keep watch" and "be careful" – why?

Apply

- How does Jesus want you to get ready for his return?
- What can you do today to get yourself more ready?

Pray

For Jesus to return soon, and for you to be able to stand before him.

Sunday 18th July

Jesus' meal

Jesus has shared many meals with his disciples in his lifetime, but this one has special significance. It was supposed to be a Passover meal, but there's a key ingredient missing: the lamb!

Read Luke 22v1-30

Jews celebrated the Passover meal every year to remember God's rescue of them from slavery in Egypt.

- Jesus uses the bread and wine in their meal to explain what his death will accomplish. How does this connect to the Passover?

Although they had some of the key elements of a Passover meal here, there's no lamb mentioned. But of course, Jesus is the true Passover lamb, and he was on his way to be sacrificed for them.

Apply

- The next time you join in the Lord's Supper with your church family, how can you enjoy and celebrate the truths of it more?

Pray

Praise God for sending Jesus as your sacrificial lamb. Ask him to remind you that none of your sin is held against you, because of the blood of Jesus.

Monday 19th July

Jesus' betrayal

Jesus' arrest is told in this passage, but it's surrounded by the sad story of Simon Peter, whom Jesus warned about betrayal, but who fell into sin anyway.

Read Luke 22v31-62

- There's a big theme of betrayal in this passage. What are the different ways Jesus is betrayed by his disciples?
- Why doesn't Jesus put up a fight when he's arrested (especially after he told his disciples to arm themselves)?
- Why is the writer at pains to show how alone Jesus was made by his friends?

Apply

- Does the sad story of Peter resonate with you? How can you relate to his unwillingness to be counted as Jesus' friend?
- Have a look at the way Jesus prays in the garden. Consider how much Jesus went through for you.

Pray

Ask God to help you understand more and more of how Jesus felt as he went to the cross for us.

Pray that you would listen to him, and his good news, rather than other voices. Ask God to keep changing you so that your actions, and the way that you live, would reflect your relationship with God.

Tuesday 20th July

Jesus' innocence

This dramatic passage tells of Jesus' trial and questioning. When you read it, consider how many times it looked like Jesus might be released. It was no accident that Jesus was indeed convicted and went to the cross.

Read Luke 22v63-23v25

Have a look at how the guards, the religious leaders, Pilate and Herod treat Jesus. It's ironic, but all of them say something true about Jesus (even if it's to mock/accuse him!).

- What do we learn about Jesus from his trial?
- Why is it important for us to know that Jesus was innocent of any offence? (Think back to the account of the Lord's Supper.)
- Why did Jesus allow them to convict him, despite being innocent?

Apply

- One man goes free instead of Jesus – Barabbas. A bit like him, we're sinners who deserved to be punished, but Jesus was in our place. Praise God for this amazing swap.

Pray

That you would see your righteousness before God because of Jesus' costly love.

Wednesday 21st July

Jesus' death

You may well have read the account of Jesus' crucifixion many times, but make sure you slow down as you read, to appreciate the miscarriage of justice that's going on, and the deeper significance of what's happening.

Read Luke 23v26 – 49

- In v26-43, who are the people that Jesus is looking out for, rather than himself? List them.
- What are the things said in mockery about Jesus which are actually true?
- In v44-49, what are the things that happen when Jesus dies, and what do they mean?

Apply

What happens when Jesus dies shows us the spiritual significance of the event: Jesus has absorbed God's wrath, made a way for us to be in God's presence, and proved his innocence, making a substitution possible.

- In what ways do you need Jesus' death today?

Pray

Pray that like the thief on the cross, you would see that your punishment would be just, but that Jesus' perfect life can take you to heaven.

Thursday 22nd July

Jesus' resurrection

We now follow a group of women, whom Jesus chose to honour with the first news of his resurrection. See if you can put yourself in their shoes!

Read Luke 23v50 – 24v12

- Why is it important to know when and where Jesus was buried?
- The women in verse 55-56 witness his burial, but they also witness the empty tomb – why do you think Jesus chose them, given that in that culture, women's word was not easily trusted?
- Why are the women so frightened by the empty tomb?

Apply

The angels at the tomb say that the reason Jesus rose is that he *had to*.

- How does it make a difference to your day-to-day life that Jesus is alive?

Pray

Pray to the living Lord Jesus that he would resurrect your body on the last day, and that you'd live in light of that truth.

Friday 23rd July

Jesus' ascension

As we come to the end of Luke, we see some of the most striking stories of Jesus' life: the ones after his death!

Read Luke 24v13-35

- Why do you think the men don't recognise Jesus at first?
- Why were they so disappointed that Jesus died? How does Jesus correct their understanding?
- What is it that helps them finally recognise who Jesus is?

Read Luke 24v36-53

- When Jesus appears to his disciples, how does he show them that he really is there, flesh and bones?
- He dives into a Bible overview again to prove a similar point to the one he makes on the road to Emmaus: why is it so important to him?

Apply

- What is Jesus' promise to his friends as he ascends into heaven? How does this relate to you?
- Do you think of the Jesus in heaven as the "flesh and bones" Jesus of this passage?

Pray

Pray that you would see Jesus as he really is in Luke, and pray to him as crucified, risen and ascended King!

The book of Malachi

If you have time, read through the whole book of Malachi – it shouldn't take you long! Some of the themes that come up a lot are covenant (permanent agreement), corruption, and the coming of the Lord.

In this book, we'll see God deep in argument with his people, and his big message is that they need to turn back to him again. Although exile should have taught them how much better it was to belong to Jesus, they're tempted, as we are, to wander.

Saturday 24th July

How have you loved us?

This prophecy to God's people begins with God making a statement, and then the people arguing back to him. God gets the last word, and this pattern is repeated in the rest of the book.

Read Malachi 1v1-5

- What is the people's wrong view of God in this argument?

God didn't Jacob love instead of Esau because of his better behaviour (he wasn't a nice character!) but because God chose to. (If you'd like to refresh your memory of the story of Jacob and Esau, go back to Genesis 25-27).

- If the people are loved like God loved Jacob, what are the implications for them?

It might seem strange that God would say he "hated" Esau, but this is to do with election: although Jacob didn't deserve the birthright, he was chosen, and it was an inescapable love that he was shown.

Apply

- Do you need to remember how unworthy you were of God's love when he chose you to inherit a birthright?
- What works of God do you look at and say, like in v 4-5, "Great is the LORD"?

Pray

Pray that you would be able to see how great God is and how he has loved you.

Sunday 25th July

Did we show contempt?

In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, God had set out very clear rules for how his people were to display his kingdom and sacrifice in miniature. It was a way of teaching the people about the cross before it had even happened. But in Malachi, it's not working properly...

Read Malachi 1v6-14

- Why did the animal being sacrificed have to be blemish-free? (Clue: think about how it relates to Jesus' sacrifice)
- Why does God say this shows "contempt" for His name?
- In God's argument here, his motivation seems to be that His name would be great "among the nations". How would a sacrificial system that's working properly help show the surrounding nations who God is?

Apply

- How can we, as God's new people, show the nations God's sacrifice for us?
- Think about the priests' motivations for not giving the best of their flocks for the altar. How does this challenge you in your wholeheartedness for God?

Pray

That God would use you as one of his new priests to display the workings of the cross to the people around you and even further afield.

Monday 26th July

A curse on the priesthood

After dispute number 2 yesterday, God has a specific judgement against the corrupt priests who aren't doing their jobs properly. It comes with a warning, and a promise.

Read Malachi 2v1-9

- In v4-7, we get a description of what a priest is supposed to do for the kingdom of God. Make a list of the different things priests are supposed to do.
- What part of the covenant (agreement with God) have they broken, and how?
- What is the warning for them, as a result (v1-3, v8-9)?

Apply

- Think about what Jesus does for you as your priest, and compare it to the list you wrote, and to what the priests in Malachi have done wrong. Rejoice that you have such a better, eternal priest!

Pray

Ask God to help you pray through Jesus as your priest, and thank him for giving you a way to be friends with him.

Tuesday 27th July

How have we been unfaithful?

Another part of God's covenant with his people was to do with who they married. They were only to marry those inside the kingdom, because of the risk of being carried off by idolatry and other gods. But this part has been dispensed with by the people too...

Read Malachi 2v10-16

- Why are the people said to have been “unfaithful”? Who have they been unfaithful to?
- Not only does God hate divorce, he also hates when we turn away to other gods. Why do you think the people were doing this?
- This is another part of the covenant that is designed to “copy” our relationship with Jesus. Marriage is supposed to be a picture of our relationship with God. How does this help you understand why God hates divorce so much?

Apply

- Whether you're married or single, consider how you can honour marriage as God has designed it.
- Think about the gods you turn to when you feel that the true God isn't enough. How can you remember Jesus' faithfulness to you in the midst of that?

Pray

Speak to Jesus as your true husband and thank him for his faithfulness to you despite your idolatry.

Ask God to destroy your idols.

Wednesday 28th July

Where is the God of justice?

In this passage, the people finally ask God the question that's really on their minds. 'Where are you?' And the answer coming back is... 'I'm on my way!'

Read Malachi 2v17 – 3v5

- Put the argument of v17 into your own words.

We all have cried out “where is the God of justice” at some point in our lives – but in this instance the people’s question does not seem like a genuine one, given the half-heartedness they’ve shown so far.

- Who do you think they want to experience God’s justice? (Clue: think about the context of their return from exile).
- What is God’s scary news, in light of this? (3v1-5)
- God says he’s coming to judge his *people’s* unrighteousness and injustice. What are the different images used, and why?
- How does this all connect to the sacrificial system in the temple?

Apply

- In this passage, God promises that He’s coming in person. Do you think about Jesus as being God’s justice manifested?
- When “the messenger” John the Baptist came, he warned people to repent in preparation for Jesus’ coming. How should you respond?

Pray

Thank God that those trusting in Jesus will be able to endure the day of his coming judgment.

Pray that you would fear God rightly in your thoughts, words and actions today.

Thursday 29th July

How are we to return?

Yesterday we were reminded that when John the Baptist came into the world and fulfilled the prophecy in Malachi, he told the people to repent in preparation for Jesus' coming. Today, we see the people struggle to understand what repent/return really means.

Read Malachi 3v6-12

- Verse 6 is a stark reminder that we're all deserving of God's judgement. And yet, what's the reason given for why we are not destroyed?
- Verse 7 reminds us that ever since Jacob, whom God also chose, his people have been breaking his rules. What's the example given in v8-12 of how the people have been disobedient?
- What's the promise in these verses for those who do repent (turn and live for God)?

Apply

- Sometimes it takes courage to be repentant. What courage did the people in these verses need to obey God? How were they supposed to step out in faith? How can you?
- Do you believe that repentance brings blessing?

Pray

Ask God to help you lead a life of repentance, of turning away from sin.

Ask God to keep the promises he makes in this passage.

Friday 30th July

What do we gain by following God?

The last dispute that God has with his people is over whether he's good to his people, or whether actually it's better off to be a sinner outside of the kingdom. It's an outrageous charge to bring against God, but have you ever been tempted to think this way?

Read Malachi 3v13-17

- What are the people's observations in v14-15?
- What is gained by following God?
- The theme of election (introduced in ch1 in the Jacob and Esau story) is right through Malachi. What hope is it supposed to provide that we were chosen before we'd done anything good for God?
- What's God's last word in v17-18? How does this answer the original question?

Apply

- Are you ever tempted to think that it's pointless to follow God because those who don't seem to prosper? How does this passage help?
- How can you fear God and serve him today?
- Consider the many blessings you have as you follow Christ. How can you enjoy these more?

Pray

- Thank God that he does care about righteousness and wickedness.
- Pray that you would fear God and serve him today.

Saturday 31st July

The end of the story

This passage doesn't only summarise the book of Malachi. It also summarises the whole Torah (first 5 books of the Old Testament, written by Moses), with a reminder of what's gone before, and a huge pointer to the next prophet to follow Malachi, a mere 400 years later.

Read Malachi 4v1-6

- Why is it good news that God will destroy his enemies on a final day?
- What's the promise for people who follow God in Jesus?
- Why do you think God mentions the giving of the law in v4?
- How are the hearers of this prophecy supposed to respond to the book as a whole?

Apply

- You may not always feel like you want this day to come, but we're told that it is good news. Ask God to keep his promises, and to destroy evil.
- Think about the people you know who don't follow Jesus. Ask God to help you to share Jesus with them urgently.
- What words of this prophet do you need to take to heart?

Pray

Consider the things you've learned about Jesus in Malachi. Spend some time praying that you would live a repentant life because of the way you see Him.