

SERMON FOCUS: I must prepare for the Lord's return.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will examine his heart to see if he is ready for our Lord's return.

BACKGROUND: We do not know much about the prophet Malachi. His book was written to the people of Israel after they had returned from the Babylonian captivity and had rebuilt the Temple. After some time, people again started taking the Lord less seriously than before. Corruption had once again worked its way into their worship and their lives. They needed a reminder that the Messiah was coming and it would not be good news for everyone.

SCRIPTURE READING: Malachi 3:1-4

INTRODUCTION:

Today is the end of an era...actually the end of the "Eras" tour that Taylor Swift has dazzled the watching world with for the last two years. While I may not be a fan of Taylor Swift, as a logistician, I am fascinated by what it took to engineer and put together this tour which is estimated to have cost over \$30 million in logistics and transportation and employed 90 tractor-trailers (some specially built) full time for two years. This was the most expensive, most produced, and one of the most publicized things in the world over the last two years. This involved:

- 152 Shows
- 51 Cities Worldwide on five continents
- Fans traveled an average of 338 miles to attend the shows
- 4.35 million tickets
- Tour gross \$2.633 billion
- 440.8 million in merchandise sales

The point is simple. If Taylor Swift came to your city, you knew it. You knew it months ahead of time. Her disciples discussed and published every detail of the tour and were excitedly looking to it months ahead of time. There was no way that anyone could miss the news, even if you couldn't afford the tickets (or win the chance to buy them).

If this much excitement can be generated over a pop star, what kind of excitement should be generated over the coming King of kings and Lord of lords. Because Jesus is coming back. Our King's return has been announced.

MESSAGE:

1. THE KING'S RETURN IS ANNOUNCED
 - a. It was customary in the world during Bible times for a king to send messengers ahead of himself so that people could prepare a proper welcome for him.

- b. The people would then prepare for the arrival of the king. One would not want the king to catch him unprepared for his arrival.
- c. Before the arrival of Jesus, God sent all manner of messengers to alert the people of His imminent arrival.
 - i. For hundreds of years prophets foretold His arrival.
 - ii. Malachi appears to be the final one before the 400 years of silence.
 - iii. Malachi means “my messenger.”
 - iv. Immediately before the birth of Christ, God sent John the Baptist as the final OT prophet declaring the arrival of the King.
- d. While our King walked on the earth, He told His disciples that He must leave and come again.
 - i. (Jn. 14:3) “If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. -- John 14:3 (CSB)
- e. When our King ascended to heaven, His disciples were met by two messengers who said: (Acts 1:11) “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven. -- Acts 1:11 (CSB)
- f. We are also called to announce the coming of the King!
 - i. We proclaim His first advent at Christmas
 - ii. We join with Christians past, present, and future to proclaim His imminent return!
- g. We join with generations of disciples in announcing the King because His return is certain.

2. THE KING’S RETURN IS CERTAIN

- a. Sure, after a while, people start thinking that Jesus isn’t really coming back.
- b. It doesn’t help that false teachers have tried to pinpoint the date of His return for centuries.
- c. It can be easy for us to get caught in the trap of thinking that because He hasn’t returned yet, He’s simply not going to.
- d. (2 Peter 3:9) “ The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. -- 2 Peter 3:9 (CSB)
- e. He has delayed in order to give people time to prepare for His coming. But that time will be coming to an end.
- f. When that time comes to an end and the Lord returns, it will be very good (for some).

3. THE KING’S RETURN IS GOOD NEWS (FOR SOME)

- a. (2) “Who will be able to stand when He appears?”
- b. The first time Christ came, it was good news for those who had been anxiously waiting for Him.
 - i. Simeon
 - ii. Anna

- iii. Mary and Joseph
 - c. The first time Christ came, it was bad news for those who did not expect Him.
 - i. Herod
 - ii. The Pharisees and Sadducees
 - iii. Those who played at religion and did not take the coming of the Messiah seriously.
 - d. When Christ returns in His glory, it will be good news for those of us who have lived our lives prepared for His return. It will be bad news for those who:
 - i. Did not believe He would come back.
 - ii. Did not serve Him.
 - iii. Played at religion and did not take the coming of the Messiah seriously.
 - e. Malachi presents the Lord's coming as a purification.
 - i. Our impurities will be purged from us and we can serve the Lord in true holiness.
 - ii. Our offerings to the Lord are currently imperfect. When we are fully sanctified, our service to Him will be perfect.
 - f. The return of our King is seriously something to look forward to!
- 4. THE GOSPEL IN SIMPLE FORM (adapted from Dr. James Merritt).
 - a. Bad News: We are all sinners separated from God.
 - b. Worst News: There is nothing we can do about our sin problem.
 - c. Good News: Christ did for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
 - d. Best News: Salvation and eternal life are a free gift, but you must receive it.

INVITATION HYMN # 277 Take My Life and Let it Be