

Malachi the Prophet

Storyteller: *Hold the tree in front of you.* I wonder what this is. It looks like a tree that has no life in it. It's brown and dead. But

I am Malachi. And this is the message that the Lord gave me for Israel.

...

You embarrass me by offering worthless food on my altar. Then you ask, "How have we embarrassed you?" You have done it by saying, "What's so great about the Lord's altar?"

But isn't it wrong to offer animals that are blind, crippled, or sick? Just try giving those animals to your governor. That certainly wouldn't please him or make him want to help you. I am the Lord God All-Powerful, and you had better try to please me. You have sinned. Now see if I will have mercy on any of you.

I wish someone would lock the doors of my temple, so you would stop wasting time building fires on my altar. I am not pleased with you priests, and I refuse to accept any more of your offerings. From dawn until dusk my name is praised by every nation on this earth, as they burn incense and offer the proper sacrifices to me. But even you priests insult me by saying, "There's nothing special about the Lord's altar, and these sacrifices are worthless."

...

You priests should be eager to spread knowledge, and everyone should come to you for instruction, because you speak for me, the Lord All-Powerful. But you have turned your backs on me. Your teachings have led others to do sinful things, and you have broken the agreement I made with your ancestor Levi. So I caused everyone to hate and despise you, because you disobeyed me and failed to treat all people alike.

Don't you know that we all have God as our Father? Didn't the one God create each of us? Then why do you cheat each other by breaking the agreement God

sometimes things that look dead can be brought to life by God. And sometimes, things that look full of life are actually bad and lead to death.

Set the tree down in front of the children. God sends prophets to help us know what is good, and what is bad. A prophet hears God speaking, and speaks the words God gives the prophet to say.

Take the Malachi symbol box in both hands, and hold it out to the children to see. Malachi was a prophet who spoke God's words to the people of Israel. God's words bring life to everyone who listens to them. These are reminders of the words Malachi spoke for God. *Put the symbol box down next to the bare tree.*

Pick up the first object: a coin. Hold it flat in your hand so the children can see it. God's Law said that everyone must offer God one tenth, or 'tithe' of what they earn. Some people kept for themselves the gifts that they should be giving to God. Some priests took the offerings of the people, but kept the best for themselves and gave God only the damaged and broken offerings. Malachi warns priests and people to give God the best they have to offer. *Hang the coin on the tree.*

Pick up the second object: the Bible. Malachi reminded the priests, the pastors of Gods people, that they are responsible to spread knowledge. This little book is the Bible, filled with knowledge from God, and our Pastors must share that knowledge with us. *Hang the Bible on the tree.*

Pick up the third object: a broken ipod. One thing in particular makes God angry: 'idolatry'. 'Idolatry' is putting something or someone else into God's place in our lives. Some of God's

Story Materials

- Jesse Tree (a bare branch set in a base to hang ornaments from)
- Malachi symbol box
 - Coin
 - teeny tiny bible
 - broken ipod
 - scales of justice
 - envelope & dove
 - refiners fire / sun

made with your ancestors? You people in Judah and Jerusalem have been unfaithful to the Lord. You have disgraced the temple that he loves, and you have committed the disgusting sin of worshiping other gods. I pray that the Lord will no longer let those who are guilty belong to his people, even if they eagerly decide to offer the Lord a gift.

...

You have worn out the Lord with your words. And yet, you ask, "How did we do that?"

You did it by saying, "The Lord is pleased with evil and doesn't care about justice."

I, the Lord All-Powerful,
will send my messenger
to prepare the way for me.
Then suddenly the Lord
you are looking for
will appear in his temple.
The messenger you desire
is coming with my promise,
and he is on his way.

On the day the Lord comes, he will be like a furnace that purifies silver or like strong soap in a washbasin. No one will be able to stand up to him. The Lord will purify the descendants of Levi, as though they were gold or silver. Then they will bring the proper offerings to the Lord, and the offerings of the people of Judah and Jerusalem will please him, just as they did in the past.

...

The day of judgment is certain to come. And it will be like a red-hot furnace with flames that burn up proud and sinful people, as though they were straw. Not a branch or a root will be left. I, the Lord All-Powerful, have spoken! But for you that honor my name, victory will shine like the sun with healing in its rays, and you will jump around like calves at play. When I come to bring justice, you will trample those who are evil, as though they were ashes under your feet. I, the Lord All-Powerful, have spoken!

Don't ever forget the laws and teachings
I gave my servant Moses on Mount
Sinai.

people were worshipping pillars of stone, and Malachi called them out. Sometimes we care more about things -- like our phones and ipods -- than we care about God. Malachi reminds us that those things are worthless, compared to God. *Hang the ipod on the tree.*

Pick up the fourth object: scales of justice. When we put God first in our lives, then we care about the things God cares about. God cares about people who are powerless and suffering: poor people, prisoners, refugees, people with broken families. Malachi reminds us that worshipping God includes treating all those people with justice. These scales are a symbol of justice. *Hang the scales on the tree.*

Pick up the fifth object: the envelope. God gave Malachi a promise to tell the people: that God would send a messenger to help God's people get ready for God Himself to come among them. This envelope is a symbol of a messenger: Let's look inside and see what the message is. *Take out the dove (it will dangle below the envelope).* This is like the dove that descended from Heaven when Jesus was baptized by his cousin John. The messenger that Malachi was talking about was John the Baptist. *Hang the envelope on the tree.*

Pick up the sixth object: manger. God gave Malachi an even bigger promise to tell the people: that God Himself would come among them. Right now, during Advent, we are getting ready to remember how God Himself came among us as the baby Jesus. *Hang the manger on the tree.*

Pick up the seventh object: refiners fire / sun. Malachi reminded God's people that we will all stand before Jesus to be judged. For people who do evil, God's judgment will be like a fire that burns away everything bad. For people who do good, God's judgement will be like warm sunshine that heals and makes them whole. *Hang the sun on the tree.*