

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## “Dancing Around the Difficult Question”

Based on Malachi 4:1-6

It usually comes with little warning:

- A doorbell chimes.
  - A street corner sign.
  - A ministerial meeting.
- And there it is.

- “Have you been saved?”
- Are you washed in the blood of Jesus Christ your Saviour?”

And so the dance around the difficult question begins. Perhaps better stated, it's not so much that the question is difficult, but awkward in its presentation and discussion. Because for of many of us, its simply not our opening line at a dinner party. These days, in many mainline churches, you are likely to hear conversations about the **'journey of faith'** more than about the **'moment that faith'** when Christ came into your life and changed things forever.

Now don't get me wrong. It's not that salvation is not important to our faith story here in the Presbyterian Church. We are good Calvinists, where, in the great debate between *'sola gratia'* and *'sola fida'*: grace verse

works: grace will win out every time. Its just that we here, often see that moment of grace, as a stepping stone on the journey of discipleship, discovery and challenge: by living each day in the care of our Saviour, committed to serving Him with our actions and our thoughts and our intentions.

“BUT FOR  
YOU WHO  
REVERE MY  
NAME, THE  
SUN OF  
RIGHTEOUS  
NESS WILL  
RISE WITH  
HEALING IN  
ITS RAYS...”

~MALACHI 4:2A

But for some of our brothers and sisters of other denominations: the moment of salvation is the most important moment of your life: a moment that changes death to life and suffering to victory. Because that moment or event in your life wipes the slate clean of the past, changes your heart, and creates you anew in His sight.

Without salvation, you are doomed.

Our writer, Malachi, was definitely of that opinion.

The name Malachi, means 'messenger' in the Hebrew, and priests and prophets were often referred to as messengers. So scholars are unclear whether the author of this short book was a priest from the temple, a prophetic voice of the day, or a man named Malachi. His message was clear, however. Things did not bode well for the world. He was equally critical of the priests in the pulpits as he was of the pew sitters in the Sanctuary. He spoke with a bluntness that still makes us uncomfortable today, and his warning was clear.

*All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. (v1).*

But for those who were willing to clean up their act, and get their priorities back in line, there was great victory and power:

*But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its*

*rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty. (v2-3).*

Malachi did not mince words. I cannot imagine that he was well liked, or his message well received. But he has a 'point'. And that 'point' should make us squirm uncomfortably in our pews. Because at some 'point' on this journey of faith we are all taking, the important question remains to be answered:

Are you in or out?  
Do you believe or not?  
Will you trust your Saviour and step out each day in faith?  
Do you commit to a life with Him?  
Are you saved?  
Yes, or no?

For some, this journey called life has been a rather straight road, with family and faith and church and community all warmly molding together through the teachings and beliefs of your families and your upbringing. For others, the journey has been a convoluted one, with side trails that distracted, missteps that caused stumbles, cliff hangers and nail biting moments. Somewhere in all that, the whispers or shouts of Christ entered into the picture, and here you are, today, still trying to figure out what it all means. And most of

us, as part of that journey, have become involved in our church and our community in different ways. We...

- volunteer for a local charity,
- worship faithfully on Sunday,
- sign-up for the pot-luck,
- say our prayers at the end of each day.

But at some point, you must dance around the difficult question.

We all must dance around the difficult question:

Do you believe or not?  
Do you trust the Saviour?  
Will you commit your heart?  
Are you saved?  
Yes, or no?"

The unpleasant truth is this: at some 'time', you will run out of 'time' to dance around the difficult question. There will be no more 'time' left to dance, and deliberate and defer. My friends, I have witnessed one approach death with a clear understanding of their salvation, and even the sadness of the moment could not take away from the peace present in the room. I have witnessed one approach death with great fear and trepidation, for time had run out, and spiritual affairs were not in order. And there was nothing I could do.

We can dance all we want. But Malachi was right. The difficult question needs to be answered while there is still time. And all the good things you do in life will not matter if you cannot answer the difficult question.

Do you believe?  
Can you trust?  
Will you commit?  
Are you saved?  
Yes?  
Or  
No?