



THE PROMISE OF HEALING

Today we're going to look at a prophecy made by the last prophet of the Hebrew OT – so the last prophet before the NT – and it's a prophecy about healing, about restoring. In particular, a healing that only Jesus can bring:

Malachi 4

Malachi here is looking forward to the reign of the Messiah, when all things will be restored. And he speaks of 2 groups (those who love Jesus and those who don't), and 2 destinies (restoration, or destruction). But important though that is, I want you to understand something this morning: Malachi isn't just talking the 'there and then'; he's talking the 'here and now', too - because even now, we can experience something of Jesus' restoring in our lives, like a teaser trailer. And in this prophecy Malachi tells us 3 things about Jesus, and the kind of healing He brings:

1) Brightness (vs2). Some of you will know that 5 years ago I suffered a breakdown, a combination of burnout and depression. And one of the symptoms was lack of proper sleep – I went for months waking up around 4 every morning. And it drove me mad, until my counsellor suggested that instead of me just lying there fretting, I get up, get dressed, go and sit outside, and watch the sunrise. So I did – and it made a difference.

And maybe that's why Malachi compares Jesus to a sunrise. Because just like the sun, Jesus brings us:

- **Light where there was darkness.** We all experience dark times in our lives, and an inner darkness, too. But Jesus can bring light, even in our darkest moments.
- **Hope where there was despair.** In many cultures darkness is associated with hopelessness and fear. But in Jesus we can find the confidence to overcome.
- **Warmth where there was cold.** The world can be a harsh, cold place, and so can our hearts. But in Jesus that harshness and coldness can begin to melt away.
- **Life where there was death.** Every spring we are reminded that the sun has the power to generate life. And so can Jesus, even when a person is dead inside.
- **Today where there was yesterday.** Watching a sunrise is like watching God create the world, all over again. And Jesus can do that with each of us, too.

I.e. Jesus comes to shine His light into our lives, no matter how dark, frightened, cold, decayed, or guilty we may feel. But we need to get up, go out, and bask in it.

2) Wholeness (vs2). "With healing in His wings," Malachi says next. So what does *that* mean?

Malachi is talking about a *tallit*, a shawl worn by Jewish men when they pray. A symbol of God's holiness; a *tallit* has 4 corners with a tassel on each, representing the 4 letters of God's name (*yod, hey, vav, hey*). That's what Malachi is referring to when he talks about wings or 'edges', *kanaphot*. Rabbis after the time of Malachi interpreted this to be referring to the Messiah – and the fact that even His shawl would be a conduit for healing.

Now fast-forward to Mark 5:24-34. Here's this woman with internal bleeding, and she wants Jesus to heal her.

What does she reach out for? His prayer-shawl!

And Jesus heals her. And if you look carefully at the story, you'll discover the triggers for that healing:

- **Desperation.** She'd sought alternatives, to no avail.
- **Belief.** She trusted that Jesus could set her free.
- **Obedience.** She acted on Malachi's words.
- **Transparency.** She was honest about the issues.

And these ingredients are vital to our healing, too.

Now this doesn't mean that every one of us is going to be healed of every ailment – we've got to leave this world eventually, and ultimate healing is something we can only know in the resurrection. So we pray believing that Jesus can and that He might, in the hope that He will.

But what Malachi is talking about – and what the woman with haemorrhaging experienced – is a healing of the *person*. And that we can know, right here, right now.

3) Happiness (vs2-3). Do you want to hear some good news? Spring is coming! And Malachi here paints a very familiar spring-time picture - baby animals leaping about all over the place. And when Jesus steps in, there's always a bit of leaping, a bit of celebrating. When He came the first time; when He comes again; and when we welcome Him into our lives. Jesus makes people want to dance (regardless of whether they're any good at it).

Now for some people that can be something they struggle with, because sometimes it isn't our bodies that need healing – it's our attitudes. Have you ever met a Christian whose joy is so deep you can't actually see it? Whose definition of mature Christianity is to look as miserable as possible? Whose evangelistic strategy involves pointing out what people *shouldn't* be doing rather than showing them what Jesus *has* done? Please understand, I'm not saying we should go around wearing fake smiles when times are tough. But seriously, if your joy is a joy that never shows you need Jesus to give you some of His! And Jesus *can*.

In case you're not convinced, here's a question for you: when you became a Christian, however that looked for you, do you know what happened in heaven (Luke 15:7)? The whole of heaven threw a party, gave a good stomp, for *you!* And if it's good enough for heaven, it should be good enough for us – because that's where we're going!

Reaching Out

Notice: Malachi ends with a command to stick to the Law of Moses, and a promise that this guy Elijah the Prophet will come. Why does he end his prophecy this way? Well, Moses pointed forwards in time to Jesus - "a prophet like me", he said. And Elijah? Malachi's not talking about Elijah as such; he's using him as a picture of another great prophet to come – John the Baptist. And John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, too: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Moses, John the Baptist, they're all saying the same thing. "You want to be forgiven and healed? Go to Jesus!"

So what kind of healing do you need today? Healing of body? Healing of mind? Healing of heart? Healing of life? Jesus came so that we could find wholeness. What *we* need to do is reach out in faith, like the woman with bleeding, and touch the hem of His garment. And I'm going to give you the opportunity to do that now.