

## Dirty Story!!

- Want to start by telling you all a dirty story...
  - **did that wake you up?!**
- **Barcaple, Easter outdoor activities camp.**
  - often wet, ground usually muddy...
  - had a rope strung through some rhododendron bushes on the side of bank;
  - blindfolded whole camp... trust game... follow the rope and your friend...
  - whole camp were muddy!! hosed down!!
- I'm not sure what was worse - getting muddy, or getting clean again afterwards!

## Malachi 2:17-3:5

- Malachi has announced a variety of **challenges to God's people.**
- We've had the failures of God's people described as:
  - **blemished sacrifices (1:8, 13, 14...)**
  - **compared to marital unfaithfulness (2:14)**
  - **now talked about in terms of unclean, dirty clothing (3:2)**
- In each case, despite the failure, God loves his people and is looking for more from his beloved, for deeper relationship, for restored fellowship...
- Here, at the end of chp.2 and through chp. 3 God is weary, tired of the unfaithfulness of his people.
  - he's been let down again by folk for whom this has become a habit
- But what is God's response?
  - to wash his hands of them?
- No, God is described in terms of two images: **launderer, refiner.**
  - **refiner** took raw ore and **heated it to burn off the impurities;**
  - learned a lot about this while I was in Motherwell - former home of a steel-works!
- Refining isn't comfortable or nice, certainly not for the product being refined:
  - all of this really struck me when I was talking with someone who'd been a brickie in Ranenscraig ("the Craig"), had worked in the blast furnaces, replacing the lining - get in as quick as you could after the furnaces had been turned off to minimise the time the furnace wasn't working, hot, uncomfortable...
  - but the result is purity, something better than that which goes in, something worth having!
  - **silver in Malachi, steel in Motherwell, righteousness in our lives!**
- Similarly, the image of the **launderer:**
  - laundry nowadays is comparatively easy... I can barely remember the mangle that my grand-father had... hard work!! Even the twin tub my mother used to have!
  - we live in a throw-away culture - too grubby, chuck it! Not way it was!
  - not "**comfortable**", for the clothes, to be scrubbed, to be beaten, to be wrung - nor for the person doing the washing.
  - chemicals in detergents are sometimes not pleasant either, dangerous even.
- But all necessary to get things clean!!
- God wants us clean:
  - in Jesus made us clean;
  - but not cheap grace, easy forgiveness - God's desire is that we grow in grace, become increasingly like him in character and action.
  - and that won't always be comfortable or easy.
- But it will be worth it!

## This was John

- This messenger (**3:1**) was John the Baptist.
  - announcing the coming of the Son, to whom the Father has entrusted all judgement (**John 5:22**)

- The Promised one comes to bring judgement, to separate sheep from goats, to divide those who have trusted themselves to him from those who have not:
  - which side of the divide are we on?
  - and will we call others to decide with urgency this Christmas...