

Introduction

- This was a passage we looked at in Motherwell shortly after 9/11...
 - for some of the same reasons we looked together at Revelation 22 on the Sunday after the Tsunami, at the start of January
- What happened in New York, in Washington and over Pittsburgh shattered the whole world.
 - we recoiled in horror at the images, those from the television, those in the papers, of planes ploughing into skyscrapers, of their subsequent collapse, of the devastation surrounding "Ground Zero";
 - we wept as we listened in on the desperate farewell messages many phoned to pass on, or saw the distress of those most directly affected.
- The futility of such loss of life... the anger that rises within us, the closely related desires for revenge and for justice... the fear and uncertainty that it all leaves behind....
 - one of the Motherwell YF left to study away from home in the week of 9/11 - the day after the horrors was her first day in a new place without support from friends or family - what she felt was a great deal of fear, uncertainty...

How do we respond?

- there are many dimensions to any answer, and we are not going to try and come up with a comprehensive Christian response, but one part of the answer comes from the passage that concludes the book of Malachi, which we have been studying over these last few weeks....

The Day is Coming...

- Do you remember one of the issues Malachi was seeking to address?
 - God's people complaining that evil-doers seemed to be the ones who prospered - 3:15
- Malachi has said various things in response...
 - including the reminder of God's abiding love for his people, the "scroll of remembrance" from 3:16...
- But the core of his answer is found in chapter 4, v.1: "the day is coming"
 - the day is coming... when God will break in to bring judgement and salvation
- Whatever you see happening around you now, for good or ill, a day of reckoning is coming:

V-Day

- In every war there is a decisive battle that determines the outcome of the war
 - after this battle there is little question as to what the future holds
 - that battle establishes defeat or victory
 - Gettysburg was such a battle in the American Civil War
 - Waterloo was such a battle in the British wars with the French
 - and in WW2, it was the battle on the beaches of Normandy
- After Normandy there was never any real question as to what the final outcome of the war would be:
 - once the Allies had established a beach-head allowing troops and arms to pour onto the continent, the fate of the Nazi armies was sealed
 - nevertheless, thousands and thousands died in the battles that followed Normandy
 - that victory, decisive though it was, did not immediately end the dying among the Allied armies, nor among the peoples of Europe
 - the decisive battle had been fought and won on D-Day, but it wasn't until V-Day - a long way off - that the end of suffering and death would come
- But that day was coming!
- Malachi sees something of that:
 - even though he wrote before the decisive victory Jesus won as he died and rose

- again, Malachi knew that the final victory would belong to God;
- he knew that there would be suffering between his day and "the day that is coming", or "the great and terrible day";
 - he actually knew that God's preparations were in hand - that is what the last couple of verses (5,6) are about:
 - *God sending Elijah again is a picture of John the Baptist's coming, who spoke with the same spirit as Elijah & announced & inaugurated Jesus' coming*
 - he knew that on that terrible, dreadful day those who had rejected God, who had chosen to go their own way and not bow to his Lordship, will reap the consequences of their choice - and they will be burned up like stubble, scattered like ashes;
 - but he also knew that on that day there will be **unbounded, vigorous joy, there will be healing, it will be like the sun coming out after a long dark night, there will be freedom.**

The Battle Continues

- However, Malachi doesn't merely pin all his hopes on a "pie in the sky when you die", a hope beyond the grave.
 - he knows that there is more to faith than that!
 - he knows that if that were all there were, then we'd be inclined to care little about how we lived now as long as we ended up safe and secure in the future!
- Malachi knows that our faith is not just about our **eternal destiny**, but about our **on-going relationship with God**; the direction and tenor of our life:
 - and so he is concerned that we don't just wait for God to intervene in the future, *- but that we also live for him now!*
- That's what v.4 is all about:
 - *"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel." (v.4)*
 - those laws **set a direction for life**; in-step with God, not out-of-step with him;
 - they point to a **relationship** with him that is **actively maintained**, not ignored and placed on the back burner.
- Going back to that analogy with a war:
 - in WW2, Normandy won the war, but there was still plenty fighting to be done;
 - the Allied troops couldn't simply swan around and assume victory was theirs;
 - they needed to press home the attack, to continue with all the discipline and skill they had to hand, to ensure that what had already been achieved was not squandered.
- **While we wait for God to break in, for V-day, we too need to walk forward with him.**

Not All There Is!

- John D Rockefeller was an immensely wealthy businessman in America during the 19th century:
 - his sons were destined to inherit his vast wealth
 - however, the father wanted his sons to know what the life of the working man was really all about
 - to achieve that end he insisted that they go out and work in the oil fields, from where their father's wealth came, alongside the common labourers
 - for more than two years the Rockefeller boys worked on drilling rigs
 - they worked long, hard hours
 - at the end of the workday they were exhausted and had to endure the unpleasantness that comes from being covered with oil on a hot, hot day
 - at night they would sit with their fellow labourers and talk
- One day, as they were trading stories over a drink, one of the Rockefellers was asked how he liked being among the common workers
 - he responded, "I love it! **This has been one of the best times of my life!**"
 - the man who asked the question said, with an edge of **sarcasm** to his voice, **"That's because you know you are not staying. You know that there is something**

better out there waiting for you when this is all over. You would look at things differently if you thought that working in these oil fields was all there was for you."

Its the same for us:

- as we look at the world, with all the troubles and agonies that go with it...
- its the awareness that this life is not all there is that alters the way in which we live, the way we see things, the way we can respond.
- *We see things differently when we recognise that God will break in, to bring judgement & salvation, when we realise that there is something better ahead.*
- Whether it is 9/11 and the World Trade Center, or the Tsunami, or Auschwitz - God will bring justice; a future; hope...
- **Pray that we'd learn to live in the light of that truth!**
 - with reassurance, hope for the future, and determination for the present

Questions to ponder

- How will this inform your answer to a non-Christian colleague or friend who says: "what do you make of [insert latest atrocity]"?
- How will this change the way you watch the news?
- How will this influence the way you vote?