4Ws LIVE READY: HERE COMES THE JUDGE!

November 22, 2026

WORSHIP

Suggested worship songs: Prepare the Way of the Lord, We Give Thanks, You are God Alone, Panginoong Tunay, We Fall Down, Holy Forever

WELCOME

With everything that's happening in our country today, what is one thing you hope to see more of among Filipinos: honesty, accountability, fairness, or compassion? Why?

WORD

Malachi 2:17-3:7

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied *Him*?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

3 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. **2** "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. **3** He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. **4** Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the Lord of hosts. **6** "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

7 "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'

We can sometimes feel like victims of injustice, wondering whether those who do wrong will ever face consequences. Yet we may also be guilty of thinking we can escape God's justice. Malachi reminds us that God is the perfect Judge. His justice will prevail, even if it does not happen according to our timing or expectations. As we wait for Christ's return, we are called to live ready.

In Malachi 2:17, God's people accused Him of approving evil and asked, "Where is the God of justice?" Their words revealed more than frustration. They questioned God's character, even though Scripture clearly declares that He takes no pleasure in wickedness (Psalm 5:4) and that righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne (Psalm 89:14).

God is not unjust, nor does He overlook evil. His justice is perfect. We can take comfort in this truth when we see wrongdoing seemingly go unpunished. God will make things right in His perfect way and time. We must also be careful not to focus only on the sins of others while ignoring our own hearts.

Malachi repeatedly confronted God's people for dealing treacherously. They were not simply stumbling unknowingly. They were acting deceitfully and unfaithfully, as though their wrongdoing could be hidden from God. The call to "take heed" was a call to watch ourselves and examine our hearts.

There are two mindsets we must recognize: feeling that God has not given us the justice we deserve, and believing we can escape His justice. We may legitimately struggle with the first, but we must guard against the second. Take comfort that God is the perfect Judge, and take heed that we do not knowingly live in sin while presuming He will not see it.

ANTICIPATE HIS RETURN

Malachi 3:1 foretells the messenger who would prepare the way, fulfilled in John the Baptist, and also speaks of the Lord who would come to His temple. Jesus is the Messenger of the Covenant. His first coming fulfilled God's promise, and His sacrifice established the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20). The sacrifices of the old covenant pointed forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus came humbly the first time, but His return will be glorious and unmistakable. Revelation 19 describes Him as Faithful and True, coming in righteousness as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Those who have genuinely surrendered to Him need not fear that day. Instead, as Jesus taught, we can lift our heads because our redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28). We look forward to being rescued from this broken world and being with Him forever.

Double Reference/Fulfillment

Malachi's prophecy points both to John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus' first coming and to Christ's future return. This is a double fulfillment: a prophecy can have an initial fulfillment and a later, fuller fulfillment. Malachi 3:2 asks who can endure the day of His coming, describing Him as a refiner's fire. This points beyond the humble arrival of Jesus to His coming in glory.

When Christ returns, there will also be a great exchange. Our perishable bodies will put on imperishable life, and death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:53–55). The Lord Himself will descend, the dead in Christ will rise, and believers will be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). This is our hope, so we should encourage one another with these truths.

ACCEPT REFINEMENT HUMBLY

As we wait, we experience trials. Some are consequences of our own choices, while others come because we live in a fallen world. God can use these seasons to refine us and make us more like Christ. The fuller's soap was strong and used to cleanse filthy fabric; the refiner's fire removed impurities from precious metal. Both pictures show God's cleansing work in our lives.

God's refinement is not meant to destroy us but to redeem us. He exposes what needs to change, and we must respond humbly. Like a refiner who continues until he sees his reflection, God works to shape us until our lives increasingly reflect Christ. Even painful discipline can produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness when we allow ourselves to be trained by it (Hebrews 12:11). Trials can remind us to depend on God rather than ourselves.

APPROACH HIM IN REPENTANCE

Malachi 3:5 lists sins and injustices, including sorcery, adultery, falsehood, and the oppression of workers, widows, orphans, and foreigners. The people may have wanted God to judge others, but He confronted their own sin. The root problem was that they did not fear Him.

We cannot hide from God. Everything is exposed before Him, and we will give an account (Hebrews 4:13). Sin earns death, but God offers eternal life as a free gift through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). We cannot earn salvation by good works. Jesus paid the price we could never afford. A gift must simply be received. His sacrifice is sufficient, and nothing can be added to what He has paid in full.

God is consistent in His character. He is a perfect Judge, yet also merciful and gracious. He calls His people to return to Him: "Return to me, and I will return to you" (Malachi 3:7). If we feel we are not receiving justice, we must trust His timing, do what is right, refuse corruption, and not take revenge. If we think we can escape His justice, we must repent, turn away from sin, make amends where possible, accept consequences as refinement, and surrender to Jesus.

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. Live ready. When Jesus comes, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11). What a day that will be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Does the imminent return of Jesus Christ impact your daily life? If yes, how? If not, why not?
2. Are you going through some form of refinement today? How can you best respond to it?
3. Is there anything in your life that is not pleasing to God? How will you return to Him?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray: Pray for truth, justice, and accountability of leaders in our country, and ask God to keep our own hearts right before Him. **Care:** Practice honesty and fairness in our daily dealings, and extend help to those who are treated unjustly or overlooked. **Share:** Be a witness for Christ through your actions, and share the hope of God's grace and forgiveness with others.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- For legislators to promote and support bills and laws aligned with God's Word.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented.
- For the rest of the Israeli hostages to be restored to their families safely. For Israel's war with terrorists to end according to God's purpose and for His glory.
- For the civil war in Syria to end peacefully, protection for Christians and other minorities, and freedom from oppression for Syrians. Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly throughout the country.
- Pray for Sudan and persecuted Christians there; earnestly seek God's intervention to stop the bloodshed. Pray for freedom from oppression, that God's word and His people bring them comfort and hope.
- Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ affected by the disaster in Nepal, especially those who remain missing. Pray that they will be found safely, and that God will strengthen and comfort their families. May the Lord provide for their needs and give them hope and courage as they face the days ahead.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God, and make disciples
- For elders, pastors, DLeaders, and families to become holy, humble, harmonious, happy, and heart-working)
- For ministries and church expansions worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain (MMRC)

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper and intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends

MEMORY VERSE

Malachi 3:1

1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.