**Sunday, April 25th, 2021**

**Malachi 3:5-18**

Timmy and Tommy were 8-year-old twins.

Their Grandfather loved them both and frequently came to visit them,

          usually bring a small gift.

One day he arrived with a small box of chocolates for each of them.

Timmy grabbed his box, and with barely a quick "Thank you",

          ran to his bedroom.

He gobbled down the candies as fast as he could,

          smearing chocolate all over his face.

Tommy eagerly unwrapped his gift,

          and opened the box and looked at all the candies.

He hugged his grandfather and thanked him for the gift.

He held out the box and said: "Here Grandpa, you choose the first piece."

Tommy and his Grandfather enjoy a second piece each,

          before putting the rest away to enjoy later after lunch.

Timmy didn't feel very well and didn't really eat much of his lunch.

Grandfather loved both of his grandsons very much.

But he enjoyed his time with Tommy much more.

He wished he could be closer with Timmy,

          but Timmy seemed to concentrate only on himself.

Grandfather and Tommy always seemed to have so much more fun together,

          laughing, joking, and sharing time with each other.

How we look upon all the gifts our Heavenly Father has given us,

          it makes all the difference in how we act.

Malachi was a prophet trying to get the people to turn back to God,

          and to live God's way.

He taught that when we honor God, and appreciate his gifts,

          we find much more joy and satisfaction in our lives.

God was disappointed with his people,

          and He was angry at how they treated others.

They cheated laborers of their wages.

They oppressed those less fortunate:

          the widows and those who had no fathers or protectors.

They cheated the foreigners and cheated everyone of justice.

They did not love God or honor him.

Because this was how they lived,

          they missed out on all the blessings God wished to give them.

They missed out on peace and happiness they could have enjoyed.

God loved his people; they were His treasured possession.

He had compassion for them, but he earnestly wanted them

          to see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

He wanted them to honor Him

          because it would make a great difference in their lives

He wanted them to listen to Him, trust Him, and obey Him,

          not so much for his sake, but for theirs.

Then the people could see how much God loved them.

Two men were walking through the English countryside together.

As they strolled along, one noticed a barn with a weathervane on its roof.

At the top of the vane were these words: GOD IS LOVE.

e remarked to his companion that he thought

          this was a rather inappropriate place for such a message.

“Weathervanes are changeable," he said, "but God's love is constant.”

The other man looked up at the weathervane and said:

“I don't agree with you about those words.”

He looked at his friend and said, "I think you misunderstood the meaning.

The sign is indicating a great truth:

          Regardless of which way the wind blows, God is love."

In good times and bad times, God loves us and cares deeply about us.

No matter how hard the wind blows, God is still with us.

He cares about us and watches over us even in the worst of storms."

The Bible tells us to: Love the Lord our God with all our heart,

          and with all our soul and with all our strength.

When we obey God's words it makes a difference:

          in our lives, and in our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Our Worship of Him is meant to bring us joy, excitement, and expectation.

We discover God's presence in our lives, and we begin to realize

          we are a part of something much larger than ourselves,

          we are a part of a bigger purpose for life.

Worship is about God, but it also blesses, and honors, each one of us.

When we accept the truth that God really does love each one of us,

          then we realize our Heavenly Father deserves our very best.

Queen Mary made it her practice to visit Scotland every year.

She was so loved by the people there

          she often mingled with them freely without a protective escort.

While walking with some children one afternoon,

          she went farther than she had planned.

Dark clouds came up unexpectedly, and soon the rain came pouring down,

          soaking the Queen as well as the children.

Queen Mary looked around for shelter and saw a house not far away.

She knocked on the door and asked to borrow an umbrella.

"If you will lend me an umbrella," she said to the lady who answered the door,

“I will send it back to you tomorrow.”

But the woman did not recognize the Queen,

          and she was reluctant to give this stranger her best umbrella.

So, she handed her one that she intended to throw away.

The fabric was torn in several places, and one of the ribs was broken.

Queen Mary gratefully thanked the woman for her help.

The children and the Queen hurried back,

          trying to dodge the worst of the rain and the deepest puddles.

The next day the woman heard another knock at the door.

When the woman opened it,

          she was greeted by a Royal Guard in full dress uniform.

Stunned at seeing the uniformed Royal Guard,

          she was unable to think of anything to say.

With great courtesy the Guard said to the woman:

          "The Queen thanks you so much for your assistance yesterday,

          but as they approached the Palace,

          a great gust of wind ripped the umbrella from her grasp, and it blew away.

          And, so, she hopes this replacement will be accepted

          in place of the umbrella, you lent to her and the children."

The uniformed Guard handed the woman a brand-new beautiful umbrella.

Stunned, the woman barely managed to say, "Thank You."

She watched in silence as the Royal Guard turned and left.

She looked at the beautiful umbrella,

          and was ashamed that she had given the Queen her worst umbrella.

And Queen Mary herself had appreciated it,

          and had honored her for her assistance.

God wants us to give Him our very best.

Our Heavenly Father deserves to receive our best.

What a difference it makes in our lives, and the lives of others,

          when we don't hold back but give all we are able to give.

When we give our very best to God, and to everyone we encounter,

          it makes all the difference in our lives and in the lives of others.

AMEN