

## THE BIG IDEA: What we see as a set back, God sees as a set up.

### The Take-Off

My guess is that if I had asked everyone this time last year to write down how they thought 2020 would play out, not many of us would have gotten it right.

From school to a pandemic to honeymoons being canceled and holidays being Zoomed, nothing has gone as expected this year. Unexpected seems to sum it all up, and so we're going to end the year with a Christmas series entitled "Unexpected"

So much about the holiday is unexpected - we try to pull off the best surprise gifts and surprise reunions

I want us to lean into that word - I believe that the Holy Spirit has something that He wants to deposit in us in order to get us ready for 2021.

So we're going to take the next 4 Sundays and focus on the unexpected: an unexpected silence, an unexpected gift, an unexpected King, and an unexpected ending.

This morning, let's turn to **Malachi 4:6 (NIV)** - the last verse of the Old Testament - and talk about an unexpected silence.

### 1. What's the deal with cliffhangers?

- a. When we read this verse, you're going to see the biggest cliffhanger in history
- b. The problem is that a lot of you won't appreciate the tension of the cliffhanger because of Netflix
- c. Yep, Netflix introduced us to binge watching and removed the tension that came with cliffhangers
- d. The "to be continued..." cliffhanger; the season ending cliffhanger, etc.
- e. At the end of the OT, God laid out a whopper of a cliffhanger: either we'd be restored or we'd be destroyed.
- f. And then, God went dark. Nothing is recorded in the Bible during the 400 years between the verse we just read and the first verse of the New Testament.
- g. Nada. Zero. Most Bible scholars call these the silent years.
- h. If this were a Netflix series, we'd just start the next episode and see how it played out.
- i. But it isn't, and so we need to figure out how to deal with the silence because, even now, there will be seasons when it can feel like God is silent and we can't afford to lose our minds when that happens.
- j. So, here are 2 benefits of the silence...

### 2. Silence challenges us

- a. The first benefit? **Silence challenges us.**
- b. I know, sometimes a challenge doesn't seem like a benefit, but it is!
- c. **Silence challenges the distractedness of our lives**
- d. **Just because God is silent doesn't mean He's quiet**
  - Psalm 19:1 / the heavens shout God's glory
  - Romans 1:20 / creation speaks of God
- e. **Silence also challenges the desires of our heart**
- f. When things get quiet, we start to wonder what we really want
- g. Are we hoping for a solution to our problems or a Savior for the world's sin?
- h. Sometimes we want a quick fix for us more than a lasting fix for others!
- i. We want a new word from God when God is looking for faithfulness to the last word

### 3. Silence prepares us

- a. The second benefit of silence is that **silence prepares us** - we learn from seasons of silence
- b. We learn to wait / Isaiah 40:31 - mount up with wings as eagles!
- c. We learn to listen / 1 Kings 19:12 - we need to lean in when God lowers His voice
- d. We learn to trust / Hebrews 13:5 - He said he'd never leave, will we believe His word?
- e. We learn to walk in victory / 2 Corinthians 2:14 (NASB) - God ALWAYS leads us IN TRIUMPH
- f. We can see the ways silence prepares us, but the question is "prepares us for what?"
- g. To PROCLAIM the Father's goodness and faithfulness

- h. Psalm 71:10-18 (NIV) / during those 400 years of silence, there were those - like David - who proclaimed that God was good and God was faithful even if God was silent.
- i. They proclaimed that God would keep His promises and that what He had done before, He would do again
- j. Those are the people who helped point the people of God toward the day when God would speak again, and when His Word would become flesh and dwell among us

## The Landing

Let me close with a story about a seemingly innocent game of Tic-Tac-Toe that God used to shape my life

[[IMAGES / Tic Tac Toe game](#)]

Sometimes when God is silent, we think we've been tricked

Maybe that's you

But **what we see as a set back, God sees as a set up**

He's moving pieces into place and working behind the scenes in your circumstances for your good and His glory

Let's close this morning by having people proclaim that goodness over those who are still waiting