

Hephzibah – Malachi 3:8-12

I. Introduction:

- A. Why do people immigrate to the United States, or Canada, or anywhere else for that matter?
1. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of reasons.
 2. When I checked into my motel in Winnipeg, the desk clerk was wearing a turban & speaking with an accent
 - a. He could have been from India.
 - b. He was friendly, and after looking at my passport, mentioned that He has relatives in Washington state.
 - c. I asked him why he was in Winnipeg while his relatives were in the U.S.
 - d. He said that the education was less expensive in Manitoba, but he was eventually going to move south because that was where the money is.
 3. Flying from Vancouver to Seattle, I sat beside a lady who told me she moved to America from Africa.
 - a. I didn't ask her the reason for her move.
 - b. But she did say that she was now an American citizen, and she asked me about my citizenship.
 - c. When I told her that my citizenship was in Heaven, and she replied that was a very good answer.
 4. One of the two books I am reading right now is called "*Sooley*" by John Grisham.
 - a. It is about a young man from South Sudan who is invited to come to America to play basketball.
 - b. His country is being ravished by tribal and religious bloodshed.
 - c. He is anxious to escape the problems back home and also to play in the NBA.
- B. Why do people move to the United States?
1. Education, freedom, safety, opportunity, starvation, violence and poverty at home?
 2. Some, over the years, have come for religious liberty.
- C. A few of those immigrants might have pictured or described America using one of the words of this scripture.
1. The Lord promised Israel that if they loved and served Him properly, "*all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a DELIGHTSOME land.*"
 2. **There** is a word you won't hear unless you are reading your Bible.
 3. The Hebrew word translated "*delightful*" in **verse 12** is far more often translated "*desirable*," "*pleasurable*" or "*pleasant*."
 4. God promised that if Israel met His criteria, He would make her land desirable and pleasant.
 5. I wonder how many immigrants to this country made that sacrifice and journey because they pictured America as "*pleasant*," or as a "*pleasurable*" place to live?

II. I have given this message the title "*Hephzibah*."

- A. One of the better kings of Judah was Hezekiah.
1. His wife's name was "*Hephzibah*" which means "*my delight is in her*."
 2. If some young couple is looking for a Biblical name to give to their newborn daughter; a name which is not common these days; they might consider "*Hephzibah*" – "*My delight is in her*."
- B. The reason I have chosen this name for my title is found in **Isaiah 62**.
1. Please turn to that chapter, and see if you agree that it meshes with our text from **Malachi**.
 2. "*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*"
 - a. *And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.*
 - b. *Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.*
 - c. *For as a young man marryeth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.*"

3. Despite the sins of Israel, the Lord will not forsake the people with whom He has made so many covenants.
4. By grace, He shall give her His salvation and righteousness. He shall delight in her.
5. And *“all nations shall call her blessed: for she shall be a delightful land.”*
6. This is guaranteed by the *“saith the LORD of hosts.”*

III. But notice that God doesn't define or describe that blessedness; that delightsomeness.

- A. In that absence, I know I have no right to insert my opinions.
 1. But for the sake of a lesson, I am going to do just that.
 2. What constitutes a *“delightful land”* in the sight of the Lord?
- B. May I suggest that it is land, a country, and a people who enjoy **peace** and **safety**?
 1. Isn't it a delight to pillow one's head in the confidence that we should be able to lift it again in the morning?
 2. There are hundreds of countries throughout the world where that is not a certainty.
 3. Related to that, I supposed, is the blessing of **law** and **order**.
 - a. **Romans 13** tells us that good government should be a terror to evil works, but not to the good.
 - b. *“For (the king, the governor, the president) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”*
 4. A delightful land is one that **has enough**; it has **prosperity sufficient** to meet peoples' needs.
 - a. It will have grocery stores filled with good food, because the blessing of God is on those who produce that food.
 - b. It will have rain in the spring, snow in the winter and a good dry period to harvest the crops.
 - c. There won't be locusts and grasshoppers; no leaf rot or drought.
 5. Some might be inclined to say that a delightful land is **beautiful**: filled with natural glory like mountains, lakes and clean rivers.
 - a. I suppose that few have ever immigrated to another country for its natural beauty, but it is possible.
- C. And then, there are other characteristics, often not recognized, which make a land truly desirable.
 1. Going back to that scripture from **Isaiah 62**, a delightful land is one where **righteousness shines bright**, and the **salvation** thereof **burns like a lamp**.
 2. The truly delightful land is **filled** with the **gospel** and the institution commissioned to spread that gospel.
 3. It is a place where the people of **Psalms 1** can be found.
 - a. *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*
 - b. *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*
 - c. *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*
 4. I confess to possessing an ulterior motive for quoting that scripture.
 - a. *“But his **delight** is in the law of the LORD,”* is the same Hebrew word – *“delightful.”*
- D. A delightful land takes the needs of the lost world seriously, so *“the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness.”*
 1. In other words, it is a land where Lord reigns freely in the hearts of its citizens.
 2. It is a place where God's Word is declared and willingly practiced.
 3. It is a land of truth and equity; justice and mercy.
 4. It's a place where there is a weekly day of rest and worship; a sabbath of some sort.
- E. The delightful land is a place where foreigners – Gentiles and the unsaved – desire to immigrate.
 1. How will the Gentiles hear about this wonderful country?
 2. Do you suppose that travelers and traders from Israel, might go out filled with praise for its King and all of its wonderful attributes?

- F. During the days of Solomon, the Queen of Sheba heard that Israel was a delightful place.
1. The blessings of God had fallen on a land which for a time had set Jehovah on its throne.
 2. For the most part there was obedience to God's Word and reverence in God's worship.
 3. *"And (the Queen) said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it, and, behold the half was not told me."*
 4. After the work of the travelers and traders, the first tourists start to share the same glorious message: *"Hephzibah."*

IV. Now let me knowingly and wilfully spiritualize this.

- A. Humanly speaking, without truly spectacular miracles, the United States will never become *"Hephzibah."*
1. The promise which the Lord makes in this chapter is being given to Israel, not to America.
 2. And it is not being given directly to any specific church or to all of God's churches collectively.
 3. Nevertheless why can't we plead with God to extend His promise & blessings beyond their original intent?
 4. What if we applied this statement to our little church?
- B. Isn't it possible that the Lord could open us the windows of heaven and pour out on our church blessings so large that this auditorium could not receive them?
1. Could not the omnipotent and gracious God once again ignite revival fires to brighten the dark skies of this sin-cursed earth?
 2. Could not our missionaries be used to *"go into all the world"* with the gospel of righteousness and to be blessing to *"all nations?"*
 3. The Lord certainly has not lost any of His ability or grace. Hasn't He said, *"I am the Lord, I change not?"*

V. But let me point out that this promise comes at the end of larger paragraph.

- A. The blessings described here would be shared with Israel only upon certain conditions.
1. We certainly shouldn't even think about extending them to us, if we don't also consider those conditions.
 2. To be God's delightful land is predicated on first giving to God what is due to him.
 3. The statement: *"I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts"* is preceded by the question: *"will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me."*
- B. As I said on Sunday, the reference to tithes and offerings, is only an illustration of the theft involved.
1. It is only the tip of the iceberg; evidence of deeper rebellion & more egregious theft. A tithe of the problem.
 2. The people of Israel were stealing the glory and service which was due unto the Lord.
 3. They were exhorted to love the Lord with all their hearts; with all their souls, with all their strength and with all their minds.
 4. But they were withholding that love and the service which should have flowed from it.
 5. Only after they returned to offering their first fruits offerings and other forms of worship would the Lord rebuke the devourer of their crops and gardens.
 6. Only after they started to serve the Lord would He step in to protect them from their enemies.
 7. Only after they returned to serving Him did the Lord of Hosts promise to make their land delightful.
- C. And the same is true for God's churches, if indeed we may make that application.
1. I suppose that tithes and offerings are not the place to start, but they are a part of the equation.
 2. Our Saviour expects those He redeems to serve and honor Him through His church.
 3. He expects us to love and honor His Word.
 4. He exhorts us to assist those evangelists who carry that word unto the *"all nations."*
 5. If we hope to see God's blessings – revival – we must meet the qualifications.
- D. Not every Christian finds himself dwelling in Beulah land, Hephzibah, but the fault is entirely his own.