



**Carstairs-Bancroft United Church**  
September 28, 2021  
**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**  
**By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



Source: Deb Marsh

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

**Today's Inspiration in one sentence**

**“But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.”**

(Malachi 4:2)

**Did You Know?**

- The book is ascribed to **Malachi**, whose name means “*my messenger*”. Scholars debate whether “Malachi” was only the title that was given to the writer as the “messenger of the Lord”, or it was in fact the author’s name.
- Researchers date the Book of Malachi around 430 BC. They suggest that he was a contemporary of Nehemiah. This is based on the situation and sins both books deal with:
- Artaxerxes, king of Persia permitted his cupbearer Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls in 444 BC. As newly appointed governor, he spearheaded reforms, such as to help the poor; to shun mixed marriages; to keep the Sabbath, and to bring in tithes and offerings faithfully. Eleven years later Nehemiah returned to Persia, and during his absence all the above reforms were abandoned and broken. Malachi condemns the corruption of these practices, but he also assures the postexilic Jewish community that the Messianic King will come not only to judge his people but also to bless and restore them.

(The NIV Study Bible; Malachi)

**Personal Insight**

Freedom is important for all of us. But it’s not only a human characteristic. It is true for all creatures, like the cute calf in the picture above. When they are in spacious, green pastures and are well-fed, they play and frolic with happiness and content.

We would like to experience this liberty and joy all the time. However, during times like this lingering pandemic we have to keep our freedom under control in order to save lives and to honour others’ safety. While many seem to be upset by the rules we have to comply with, I found Apostle Paul’s words wise in situations like ours and in general: **“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial.**” (1 Corinthians 6:12)

Neither the people of Malachi’s time nor we live in perfect conditions that would inspire us to always ‘frolic’ in joy. But the Almighty promises us an era when healing, and restoration will be wholly fulfilled. In the meantime, we are advised to remain faithful to God, and to revere the Holy One’s name in all circumstances.

**“Surely the day is coming ... says the Lord Almighty.”** (Malachi 4:1)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Frolicking in Freedom

*You will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.*

Malachi 4:2

### READ Malachi 4:1 – 3

A third-generation farmer, Jim was so moved when he read “You who revere my name . . . will go out and frolic like well-fed calves” (Malachi 4:2) that he prayed to receive Jesus’ offer of eternal life. Vividly recalling his own calves’ leaps of excitement after exiting their confined stalls at high speed, Jim finally understood God’s promise of true freedom.

Jim’s daughter told me this story because we’d been discussing the imagery in Malachi 4, where the prophet made a distinction between those who revered God’s name, or remained faithful to Him, and those who only trusted in themselves (4:1–2). The prophet was encouraging the Israelites to follow God at a time when so many, including the religious leaders, disregarded God and His standards for faithful living (1:12–14; 3:5–9). Malachi called the people to live faithfully because of a coming time when God would make the final distinction between these two groups. In this context, Malachi used the unexpected imagery of a frolicking calf to describe the unspeakable joy that the faithful group will experience when “the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays” (4:2).

Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise, bringing the good news that true freedom is available to all people (Luke 4:16–21). And one day, in God’s renewed and restored creation, we’ll experience this freedom fully. What indescribable joy it will be to frolic there! – By **Lisa M. Samra**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Jesus, help me to live joyfully as I remember the freedom only You provide. Amen.**

How have you experienced freedom in Jesus? What other images help you to visualize joy?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The two word pictures used in Malachi 4:2—“the sun of righteousness” and “healing in its rays”—stand in contrast with the verses on either side. Judgment comes into focus in verse 1, “[the day] will burn like a furnace,” and in verse 3, the prophet says the wicked “will be ashes under the soles of your feet.” On the other hand, how exhilarating it is to think of “healing rays” from the “sun of righteousness” (referring to the manifestations of God’s kindness; see Luke 1:78–79). Then there’s the lively activity pictured in the words, “And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves” (Malachi 4:2). The blessed well-being vividly portrayed in this verse is the portion of those “who revere my name.” Revere is the translation of the Hebrew word *yaw-ray'*. This word is also used in 2:5 and 3:5 to remind God’s people to revere and fear Him in their worship. – By **Arthur Jackson**

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