

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

Psalm 126, Malachi 3:1–5

Malachi 3 is like one of those gifts wrapped in a box, wrapped in a box, wrapped in a bigger box—the kind that you open at a holiday party after your eyes have been blindfolded and your hands have been stuffed into a pair of potholders by your fellow party-goers who also happen to be snapping and posting photos of you as you try to unwrap it.

In this kind of gifting situation, the gift is irrelevant. It's the opening that delights (the onlookers, not necessarily the opener). But in Malachi, it's the gift that brings the light. Literally: A prophet predicts the coming of another prophet who will predict the coming of an even greater unnamed someone, who will come suddenly and BAM!—light the place on fire.

The text says that he (this gift happens to be a he) will be sudden and will burn away any expectations that may have formed during the waiting process. When he gets here, we won't be able to stand how bright he is. Literally: "Who can stand when he appears?" (Malachi 3:2) He'll burn hot enough to smelt metal and shine bright enough to burn away evil itself. Literally. He'll burn away lies and falseness and oppression at work and loneliness at home. He'll be like the sun or actually will be the sun that shall rise with healing in its wings. Who can look directly at the sun?

That's why the boxes are wrapped within boxes: to give us something to work through as we get ready for, well, we can't quite imagine what, which in this case is a who, who will be a something sort of like the sun, literally. Behold, he is coming.

Sophie Wetzig—Sophie lives in East Boston and has been attending Park Street Church since the summer of 2020. She likes to go for a run in the morning, but sometimes finds it hard to get out of bed.