

Give God Your Best in 2006 Malachi 1:6 – 14; 3:7-10

Intro: About 8 months back as I stood here in the pulpit preaching God began convicting me. He began convicting me of a sin I was committing. In God's eyes this sin was a heinous sin. What was this sin? Was I secretly stashing money from the offering plate? Was I carrying out an inappropriate relationship with a member of the congregation? Was I secretly engaged in activities which would have caused scandal if known? No, none of those things; in fact my sin was a very public one. Most of you here today probably watched as I committed this sin. What was the sin? The sin I had committed was the sin of preaching a bad sermon. It was a sermon that neither brought glory to God nor was it ever going to bring lost sinners to Christ. Now I had preached bad sermons before that and I know I have preached bad sermons since then but this particular one stands out because first of all I can't even remember what it was about and secondly it was a sermon that I had put very little study in. I had put other things ahead of my sermon prep and had run out of time so I cut corners and had basically used someone else's outline. It is not uncommon for preachers to use other preacher's outlines; it happens all the time. But this time it was basically his sermon I was preaching. So as I stood here preaching that morning God began to convict me. He began asking me; "Are you giving me your best?" He didn't even ask if I was giving you my best; he wasn't concerned with that at that point. He was more concerned with whether I was giving **Him** what **He** deserved. He knew that as long as I gave Him my best everything else would take care of it's self. He was right. I knew I wasn't giving Him my best; He deserved better than I had given Him.

That night when I got home I felt so empty. I had cheated God and He deserved better. Since that day I have doubled my sermon study & prep time. You see I never ever want to feel that I am not giving God what he deserves from me.

This is essentially what Malachi was telling God's children and it is his message to us today. Give God your best. Maybe better stated, God deserves better...In almost every area of life and in anything we do, we're always told that we need to give our best. Coaches tell us that we need to give 110% and leave everything out on the field/court. Our parents always tell us to do our best in school and do something with our lives. Our bosses always tell us to be productive and come ready to work. I want you to know that God is the same way; He wants us to give Him our best. Sadly enough, we don't give God our best; we tend to give Him our least, if anything at all.

[Read Malachi 1:6-14]

The story is told of an ongoing exchange between former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger and his biographer. Sometime after the author submitted his first draft to the former Cabinet member Kissinger asked, "Is this the **best** you can do? The biographer replied, "Henry, I thought so, but I'll try again." So back he went to craft his work returning in a few days with another draft. Kissinger called the author in the next day and said, "Are you sure this is the **best** you can do?" "Well, I really thought so, said the biographer. "But I'll try one more time." This very same exchange went on eight times, eight drafts; and each time Kissinger asked, "Is this the **best** you can do?" Finally, the author submitted his ninth draft and was called into Kissinger's office the next day. Again Kissinger asked the same question. Exasperated, the author replied, "Henry, I've beaten my brains out – this is the ninth draft. I know it's the **best** I can do: I can't possibly improve even one more word." Kissinger then looked at his biographer and said, "In that case, now I'll read it."

God is looking for servants who are willing to give him their very best. Next Sunday night we our evening service will be devoted to the topic, **Where were have been, were we are and where God would have us be as a church.** God deserves our church to be the very best church we can build for him. That can only happen when we commit to giving God our very best; when we commit to excellence as a body.

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus tells us we are to **"...love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."** I guess Jesus is telling us that we are to give God our best.

The name Malachi means "My messenger" (3:1). He was the last of the writing prophets but wrote nothing about himself. We have no biblical information about his ancestry, call, or personal life. But the important thing about messengers is the message they bring, not who they are or where they came from. In 538 b.c., Cyrus issued a decree that the Jews exiled in Babylon could return to their land and rebuild their temple (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1). About 50,000 of them accepted the challenge; and in 515, after much delay, they completed the temple. Ezra visited them in 458, and in 445 Nehemiah became their governor and served for twelve years (Neh. 5:14).

While Nehemiah was back at his post in Shushan (Neh. 13:6-7), things began to fall apart in Jerusalem, and when he returned, he had to take some drastic steps to reform the nation. It's possible that the Prophet Malachi was called at that time to expose the sins of the people and call them back to God.

Malachi was the last prophet Judah heard until John the Baptist came and the prophecy of 3:1 was fulfilled. His messages against "the sins of the saints" need to be heeded today.

Today Malachi is telling us that God deserves better than what we have been giving Him. Let's look at the areas in which Malachi says we should strive to give God our best.

First we should strive to...

1. **Show Him Proper Respect V. 6**

- a. Of all the names God uses to identify himself to people, the greatest is Father.
 - i. As a father he agrees to watch over us, care for us, provide for us, protect us and shelter us
 - ii. That is exactly what he did for the Israelis.
 1. He had looked after them as a father looks after his children God had loved Israel as a father loves his son.
 2. Even on the purely human level a son owes reverence to his father just as a servant owes fear to his master.
 - iii. Since God had proved Himself to be the Father of His people, was He not entitled to His honor?
 - iv. At the very least he was entitled to their fear
- b. When God, through Malachi, asked Israel these questions, the people simply shrugged them off.
 - i. **"Wherein have we despised thy name?"** they said.
 - ii. They had the arrogance to ask God, when have we despised your name?
 - iii. It is a common response for sinful man - when reprov'd of a wrong – to try to justify the action rather than just accept the reprove and make the necessary changes.
 - iv. God doesn't hesitate to tell them.
 1. Their sacrifice was un worthy
 2. He says to them; *'When you say, 'The altar of God is not important anymore; worship of God is no longer a priority,' that's when.'* V. 8
 3. Another way is *'when you offer worthless animals for sacrifices in worship, animals that you're trying to get rid of—blind and sick and crippled animals—that's when.'* V.9
- c. The church today isn't much different than in Malachi's day; we no longer truly respect God the way He should be respected.
 - i. Is it respectful to God to make attendance at his church something that we do when we feel like it?
 - ii. Is it respectful when we walk into God's house and we see something that needs picked up or fixed but we ignore it or we don't tell someone for fear they may ask us to take care of it?
 - iii. Is the way we dress when we come to church respectful?
 1. I don't want to do the Holy Spirits job here but some of us tell God your worship service isn't important enough for me to put on the best close I have hanging in my closet.
 2. Sometimes God may just be in heaven looking down on people in church on Sunday thinking...how rude of you to come into my house dressed like that when you have that nice dress in your closet or those nice dress pants and shirt.
 - iv. Do our offering show respect for God?
 - v. Does it show respect to God to not give 100% to everything you do for the Church?
 - vi. Last summer the bushes around the parking lot needed weeded and trimmed; did it show respect to God to let his facilities look rundown?
 - vii. Do we show respect to God when we reduce His name to nothing more than an explanation mark? *"God, it's cold outside."*
- d. I could go on and on but friends; Malachi is telling us today that God deserves better than the **Level of Respect we give Him.**

Secondly we should strive to...

2. **Make Him a Priority over our Possessions Vv. 7-9**

- a. We could sum up Israel's problem by saying that they were suffering from SARS – Severe Acute Religious Syndrome – and it was highly contagious.
 - i. Look at verse 8: **“And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil[wrong]? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil[wrong]? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.”**
The priests were accepting not just the second best from the people; but worse than that, they were bringing God sick sheep and gross goats.
 - ii. They were offering the ones that weren't worth anything.
 - iii. Imagine the parade of diseased animals limping and stumbling blindly toward the Temple.
 1. Their oozing sores were covered with flies.
 2. Some of them probably collapsed even before they got there!
 3. The reason God says, **“is that not evil [wrong]?”** twice in this verse is because the people, and certainly the priests, should have known better.
 4. In Leviticus 22:2, 19-20, God made it very clear that He was not interested in substandard sacrifices: **“Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the LORD** then in verses 19-20 God says **“Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you.”**
- b. The lesson God is teaching in Leviticus and Malachi is referring to is that God deserves better; he deserves priority over your possessions.
 - i. These people were more concerned with keeping what they had than they were in giving God their best.
 - ii. Their hearts were not in it any longer.
 - iii. They were still coming to church but it was just a meaningless ritual to them.
 - iv. They had accepted mediocrity in their lives and their leaders did nothing about it.
 - v. God tells them to try and offer their junk to the governor as payment of their taxes and see if he would accept them.
 - vi. The bottom line is they thought God didn't care what they did.
 - vii. After all, they were middle class people who had worked hard.
 - viii. They had high taxes, bills to pay, and they didn't have a lot of extra cash.
- c. In scripture there are at least three standards for sacrifice:
 - i. Give the best we have...Leviticus 22 above and other places in the OT.
 - ii. Give to God first... **“And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly.”**
2 Chronicles 31:5
 - iii. Giving should cost something... 2 Samuel 24, David came to the recognition that his own sin had led Israel astray, and God's judgment had come in the form of a plague on the people. David interceded in prayer and then he wanted to offer a sacrifice to God. He went to a place owned by a man named Araunah and told him that he wanted to buy his threshing floor so that he could build an altar to the Lord. Araunah generously offered to give the oxen for the offering and the wood for the fire – kind of a “turn-key” sacrifice. All David had to do was sit in the pew and everything would be taken care of for him.
- d. **God deserves to be a priority over our possessions; God deserves better**

Thirdly we should strive to...

3. **Give Him Praise and Worship Vv. 10-11**

- a. Verse 10 should cause us to bolt upright in our chairs He would much rather have us shut down the church than to come to Him with pathetic leftovers: **“Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”**
 - i. As hard as this may be to hear, God does not need our sacrifices.
 - ii. He's saying to us today, **“Don't you dare allow me to be represented as some lifeless religious icon. I'd rather you shut everything down than have you continue in a phony religious ritual. If you're not prepared to give me every inch of your life, then you can't play church because I'm closing the doors.”**
 - iii. This stings - but no worship at all is better than halfhearted sacrifice.
 - iv. God doesn't need us to give Him anything.
- b. Notice in verses 11 & 14 that following the mention of offering it is followed by (v.11)

- i. Every time God mentions sacrifice, He follows it with the phrase, “...**my name Shall be great...**” or “...**my name is dreadful[feared]...**”
- ii. Sacrifice is directly linked to the greatness of God.
- iii. That’s why when we give Him our best we are grasping the greatness of God.
- iv. Conversely, when we offer Him little or nothing, we are really saying that God doesn’t matter much to us.
- v. When we fail to celebrate God’s greatness by giving Him our best, our priorities go out of whack, and we become bored with God and excited about the world.
- vi. Have you ever noticed that there is no one more miserable than a half-hearted Christian?
- c. Earlier I read to you Matthew 22:37 let me read it to you one more time, “...**love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.**”
- d. Sonicflood sings a song called heart of worship it describes the kind of worship God is looking for: When the music fades And all is stripped away And I simply come Longing just to bring Something that’s of worth That will bless your heart

I'll bring You more than a song For a song in itself Is not what You have required You search much deeper within Through the ways things appear You're looking into my heart

King of endless worth No one could express How much You deserve Though I'm weak and poor All I have is Yours Every single breath I'll bring

I'm coming back to the heart of worship It's all about You It's all about You, Jesus I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it for it's All about You, Jesus

- e. Doesn't God deserve better in the way we give Him praise and our worship?

Finely we should strive to...

4. Offer Him Pure Offerings Vv. 13-14; 3:7-10

- a. The people had become bored with the hole church thing; verse 13 tells us that they saw church and giving of themselves at church a burden “**Ye said also...what a weariness it is!**”
 - i. They had come to place in their walk with God that serving at the temple making the daily sacrifice had become wearisome.
 - ii. They even “**sniffed at it contemptuously,**” which means that they “puffed” or “blew” in exaggerated exasperation.
 - iii. I imagine God looking at us and wondering why we get so bored with Him.
 - iv. God actually put this into a question in Micah 6:3: “**O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein[how] have I wearied [burdened] thee? Testify against me [answer me].**”?
 - v. In Isaiah 1:12-13, we hear an extreme exclamation from the Almighty: “**When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? ¹³Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me...**”
- b. Notice the strong words at the beginning of verse 14 “**But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing....**”
 - i. God not only wants the church closed up he wants the person who brings impure offerings to be cursed – do you hear that – God wants the person who give impure offerings cursed.
 - ii. No wonder God is angry, they had been commanded to give their very best and had promised to do it but then they turn around and give their leftovers, the things they didn’t want or need.
- c. Have you ever asked why things always go wrong in your life?
 - i. You have come to an alter at some point in your life and cried out to God here is my life take it - Take me and mold me into what you what me to be
 - ii. You have sung “*I surrender all*” only to take it back again later

Conclusion: I am sure some of you are thinking I am talking about money – I’m not – I’m talking about your all:

- Your time
- Your treasure
- Your talent
- Everything

When Paul said for us to present our bodies a living sacrifice he wasn’t talking about money he was talking about everything that makes you – you.

If God wanted your money He could just take it from you...he could take your job away from you and give it to another Christian who would be a better steward with it, someone who would give more to the church. No God

wants more than your money; he wants totally sold out, committed Christians who are willing to do whatever it takes to make our Church a great church rather than just a good church. God wants a church of excellence and the only way that will ever happen is if we Give him what he deserves.

God sacrificed His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we would have the opportunity to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. That gives Him a right to our best. Don't short-change God another minute. Start giving Him your best today!

Are you doing our best for the Lord, or for others? Are you giving Him one hundred percent or are you just giving Him enough to get the job done?

We bend over backwards to do things for family and friends. We'll work hours on projects for work or for school; but how much of an effort do we make for God? We do get brief spurts of enthusiasm where we give our best to Him, but that is not always the case. God looks at our hearts. He sees the true motives behind the things we do for Him and in His name. When our hearts are not right in our efforts for Him, then we are in sin.