

Jason Upchurch - Malachi 1:1-5 - Give the King the Best

As we come back to Malachi 1 this morning, I think we're going to be challenged and encouraged by what we read here.

Here's the big picture this morning: Give God your best because he is a great King.

Whatever you're doing in life you should be doing it as though God is King and he deserves your best service.

A lot of times I think we have this idea in that in the Christian life we can give a half hearted effort at following Jesus and that's okay. That we don't really need to strive all that hard because it doesn't really matter. So we just go through life half heartedly trying to please Jesus. We know there's more we could give, but we don't try.

The World Series is going on right now - the Dodgers and Yankees are battling it out. Imagine you got a call from the Dodgers. Hey, it's an emergency and we need you to come in and fill in short stop. Hit some balls, put in some innings to get us through. Hopefully you'd get in there and put in every effort to grab some grounders and hit some balls for the team to win a World Series.

That's just baseball. We've been called up to the Kingdom of God. Where Paul says he toils and labors **1 Tim. 4:10** because he has his hope set on the living God.

Where Peter says make every effort **2 Pet. 1** to be virtuous and knowledgeable and filled with self control and godliness.

Yes, he's your Father. Yes, he is gracious and kind. But sometimes we forget that God is also the great King of the universe and we should act as though he is our King. And give service to the King.

1 Cor. 10:31: Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

Even the small mundane things of life should be done to the glory of God. Done in such a way that God is pleased and honored by what we do. Done in such a way that God looks good.

Col 3:17: And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Are you playing soccer? Do it as though you're playing for Jesus. Are you changing diapers? Do it in such a way that God is honored. You're changing the diapers of future princes and princesses in the Kingdom of God. Are you on hold again with doctors office? Taking your car into the shop? Doing homework? Talking about baseball, politics or vacation plans?

Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The idea is the same in the OT and NT: Give God your best because he is a great King. Jesus is a great Lord. And we see that here this morning.

Before we dive, let me give you a little bit of the flow of the book of Malachi so you get an idea for how the book flows. Because there's going to be a big shift in feel between what we saw last week and what we see over the next few weeks.

God opened the book by proclaiming his love for Israel. We saw that last week. God warns Israel in love, he tells Israel he loves her, he destroys her enemies and he proclaims his greatness all as a show of love toward Israel.

The problem is that Israel doesn't love God back. That's the problem in the book of Malachi. Israel is not all that impressed with God. And so the outline of the book is something of a sandwich. It starts with God's love

for Israel. It ends with God threatening judgement. And in the middle are all the reasons for the coming judgment. It's basically 6 reasons.

1. Israel is dishonoring God by poor sacrifices 1:6-14
2. Israel's priests dishonor God 2:1-9
3. Israel dishonors God by Intermarrying 2:10-12
4. Israel dishonors God by divorcing 2:13-16
5. Israel dishonors God by apathy to obedience 2:17-3:5
6. Israel dishonors God by not tithing 3:6-15

And for those 6 reasons God is going to judge Israel. So the transition here in Malachi is because although God loves Israel, Israel doesn't love God. And what God does over the course of the next couple of chapters is to call out Israel for specific sins. God does not usually call out sin in vague terms. He is usually very specific.

And he is specific because any time God wants specific repentance. His warning implies that they would repent then he'll hold off on the judgement.

Turn to Jer. 18:1-11 for a minute. This is an important principle when we come to the prophets. God can do whatever he wants with his people, but he warns them because he wants them to repent. **Read 1-11**

So there's this little parable of the potter. The potter can do whatever he wants with his clay. If he's making something and it gets messed up, he can smash back into a lump and start over. That's what God can do with his people. That's a general principle.

So if God declares that he's about to destroy a nation, it's not like the nation is stuck or has no options. It's not like the nation is just doomed to be obliterated. They could turn from their evil.

By the way: That's true with our country. There's a lot of people who lament that America is just too far gone, we can't change, we can't repent. Frankly that's just nonsense. We could repent; and we pray that god would open our eyes and hearts to that.

Remember Jonah? He went to the most wicked country on the planet. And he preached the bare minimum he could: "Forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Didn't even tell them to repent; just "judgement's coming." And then went and pouted on the side of a hill because he knew God would grant them repentance. And wicked Nineveh repented. And God spared them. And Jonah was mad.

I often wonder if a lot of Christian Americans are like Jonah. They secretly want some sort of civil war or chaos because of sin rather than God to graciously grant our country repentance. Don't we want grace for our countrymen? Of course.

This is how God operates. This is the fine print in God's announcement of judgement. If he says he'll destroy, people can repent and not be destroyed. If he blesses a country, he can take that blessing away as well if they fall into sin. But the ultimate goal is for his people to repent.

Back in Mal. 1 this is God's goal: that Israel would repent. And this whole section is the first of 6 major sins that God calls Israel out for. Here, that they would repent of half hearted worship of God.

Or as I said before, give God your best because he is a great king. So let's look at our passage.

1. The problem of dishonor. Read 5-6

I know we technically covered **Vs. 5** last time, but it's helpful to read it because it sets up the problem our passage. And the problem is that God is not getting honor.

Part of the way in which he would show Israel he loved them was that his name would be made great beyond the border of Israel. The glory of God would go out everywhere. But the problem was that even within the border of Israel the people weren't all that impressed with God.

They knew what honor was. **Read 6**

Sons instinctively honor their fathers. That's what we do. It's part of the 10 commandments: Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Paul reworks that a little in the New Covenant to say that those who honor father and mother will have long life. There's blessing in honoring your parents. And for the most part children do honor their parents.

Also slaves honor their masters. Again, this is just the way it is. Your master owns you, provides for you, protects you. You owe your life to your master. It would be unthinkable for a slave to dishonor his master. Why would you ever do that?

Well, God says: "I'm your father and I'm your master. Where's my honor? Where's my fear?" The Jews had no real fear of God. They had become bored with God. Here's God saying his name would be great, and yet they didn't think he was all that great. He had become small in their eyes.

It's interesting, in Hebrew the word for honor is kavod. It's often the word used for "glory." We give honor to God or glory to God. The word "kavod" actually means weight, or weightiness. So when we give glory to God we are giving him weight in our lives. He has a heavy influence in all that we do.

The planets in our solar system rotate around the sun. Why? Why don't they all rotate around Mars or Venus? Because the sun is weighty; 99% of the mass of our solar system is in the sun. And so everything revolves around the sun.

In the same way, God calls us to give him Kavod. Weight. That our lives would revolve around him and everything that he's doing. And one of the biggest problems with his people - Old Testament and New - is that we often don't give him weight in our lives. We treat God lightly.

And so one of the things that God has to do is remind his people of the weight and glory that he has so that they honor him properly.

Think about that for a minute. Do you ever struggle with giving God weight in your life? Giving him the glory and honor due his name? Sometimes we just float around and don't even consider God or how he affects our lives. And God has to tap the microphone and say "Hey, remember me! I'm your King! I'm the one who created the entire universe with my words. You don't take a breath unless I decree it? Honor me in all you do"

But often we are dull and don't acknowledge God's greatness. So he reminds us that he deserves it. So crazy. It'd be like seeing a nuclear bomb off in the horizon and we're too busy looking at our phone to realize this massive thing is right there.

It'd be like sitting on the beach and a tidal wave is on the horizon - this massive wall of water - and we're more concerned about building a little sand castle to look up and notice.

This is one of the tragedies of God's people. We often forget that God is great and we should orient every part of our life around him.

What does that look like though? I think most of us would acknowledge God is a great God. We'd say that. Of course God is great. The Jews would have said that too. God is awesome. He delivered us out of Egypt. Yay. But they didn't really think he was great. How do we know? Because their service to God was half hearted.

Read 6-8

Remember in the OT the way to sacrifice to God was to bring an animal. But it couldn't be just any animal. It had to be the best animal. The best of your flock, unblemished, no defects at all. You gave God your best offering. But what the Jews had done was start to bring the runts. The stragglers. The lame and blind animals. I mean, does it really matter? It's still meat. It's still feeding the priests.

But they were profaning the altar. They were hating the name of God.

Now, if you noticed, this section is directly aimed at the priests. They are the ones held accountable. **Read 6**

The priests were held accountable because they were the ones who decided what sacrifices could be offered. They were the gatekeepers.

But I think the people were guilty as well because it was the people who brought the animals to begin with. They were the ones who were supposed to ensure that the animals they brought were the best, the purest. But they started bringing these maimed animals for sacrifice and they were given the blessing of the priests.

But these lame sacrifices showed that the people really hated God. They didn't love him. They said they loved him and honored him. They were bringing some sacrifice. But in reality they didn't and that was seen in the sacrifices they brought. They were bringing to God animals that were so nasty that their own governors would have been grossed out by them.

Listen carefully: Your view of God will affect how you serve God. If you have a big view of God - that he is great and awesome and the King of kings and brought you into an amazing kingdom - it will always compel you to joyful and sacrificial service.

If you have a low view of God you won't want to serve him. It'll be a chore. It'll be boring. It'll be dreadful. You'll give him your second best or third best or whatever is left over. **Turn to Rom. 12** for a minute.

Now, it might be easy to write off this warning in Malachi because we're not bringing animals to church every Sunday for slaughter. Or at least I hope you're not doing that. But what's interesting is that in the NT we find out that every believer is a priest. Every believer.

1 Pet. 2:9-10: But you are a chosen race, a royal what? Priesthood. A holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

As believers we are a royal priesthood. What do priests do? We offer sacrifices. Not animals. That's no longer a thing. Now we offer our whole lives as an offering to God. Every thing we do we offer to God as worship. We see that here in **Rom. 12. Read 1-2**

What's Paul say? He says to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Everything about our bodies should be pleasing to the Lord. What we wear, what we do with our bodies, the places our bodies go.

Really, the idea is how we conduct our lives. Are our lives completely holy to the Lord always? We're not to be conformed to the world. What we do and how we dress and look should be odd to the world. We don't conform to the world. That's what we were. But instead we are transformed by the renewing of our mind.

The more and more God's Word is on our mind the more and more different our lives will look. To the point where we begin seeking the will of God even on small matters that require a lot of discernment. But people who know you should know rather quickly just by what you wear and how you conduct yourself and live that you're a believer.

Christians can't help but honoring God so it comes out in all we do. And I don't mean in an obvious and obnoxious way where it seems to all be a show. It's in a way that comes naturally as God changes us. It'll be evident in how you pay taxes, how you drive your car, how you talk about church, how you raise your children, how you treat your family.

For Christians, every aspect of our lives should have this radiant glow that we are serving the living God. **Back in Mal** the people didn't have that anymore. They were supposed to but they lost that. **Read 8-10**

The offerings that the Jews were giving God were so grotesque that God said "Would somebody just close the gates of the Temple?" Just put the fire out, everyone go home because this is offensive. They were just going through the motions, offering up whatever was left over.

Can I just say, I think there have been times in all of our lives where we offer up to God our garbage. What's left over.

And I'm not talking about those times when we're just spiritually down or going through a desert season. There are times when we need rest because we're weary or sick or hurt or just down. And it's okay to take rest.

I'm talking about times when we know better, when we could have offered God better and we just didn't care. Times where we should have brought the good lamb, and we brought road kill.

You committed to teaching something and you just winged it even though you had plenty of time to prepare.

You put off helping someone that you knew could have used your service and by the time you got to it your help didn't matter.

Rather than play with your kids or disciple your kids you throw in a movie because you had a long day, like yesterday, and the day before. And last week.

You make excuses for not being the best employee or employer and represent God well in your profession because life is hard and the economy and stuff.

We've all been there. Where Instead of doing a top notch job in honoring the Lord in every part of life as a pleasing sacrifice, we make excuses for poor sacrifices.

Listen, God is not mocked. If we're tired, he calls us to rest. If we're in a dry season he calls us to come to him the fountain of living water. But if we're constantly putting in half hearted service to God know that God is not pleased. **Read 10, 13-14**

God's not in heaven just going "You do you, babe. It's fine I'm God and I'll make it." No, he demands honor and glory and excellence in all that we do.

He says that when we say that serving him is weariness and we snort at serving God, he is dishonored. When our lives are lived second best to him he calls us a cheat. We're cheating God. Don't cheat God of the excellent, top notch service he expects.

And I'm not saying to radically transform every aspect of your life. But I think we'd all do well to step back and just self reflect and ask ourselves: is our life really bringing God the best? Are we really offering service as humble sinners who have been saved by grace?

See, grace doesn't allow us to just offer junk to God. No, the grace of God in salvation perfects our lives so that what we offer to God is the best.

What if you're struggling to offer God the best? What's the remedy? The remedy is to be reminded that God is great. **Read 11**

God's name will be great. And did you notice that because of his greatness, incense and offerings will be made in his name? That's the connection. How do you rekindle your love for service to God? Remember that he's a great King.

Remember when Mordecai told Esther she had to go to the king and plead for the lives of the Jews? And she said she might die? And Mordecai said don't think you'll escape. Either salvation will come through you or through someone else - God is great and will work the salvation.

In the same way know that God's name will be magnified among the nations. And you can be part of that or not. But it will happen. Are you part of declaring the greatness of the name of God in your home with your little ones? In your neighborhood when you bump into your neighbors? With your coworkers? With how you serve the body here? When people come away from you do they go, "Man, God is great. And that lady certainly believes it?"

So we have a chance to make the name of God great. It's interesting that God calls himself the Lord of Hosts at the end of **Vs. 11. Read**

What's the significance? Yahweh of hosts means that Yahweh is the God over all the hosts of heaven. The hosts of heaven are all the mighty angels and mighty seraphim and cherubim and spiritual creatures who see God in all of his glory.

That's part of our problem: we don't see the physical power and brightness of the glory of God. They do and they orient their lives around it. We live by faith here.

Faith in the great King. The Great King whose glory has gone forth to the nations and he has mercifully brought us in. Let's give him right sacrifices. The best service, the more joyful lives because our King is worthy.

Pray