

November 9, 2025  
Return: A True Heart of Worship  
Malachi 1:6-14  
Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction...When we lived in VA, I was heavily involved in the campground ministry of our conference camp there. While serving there I became good friends with the director of the camp, Miss Josie. Now there's something you need to know about Miss Josie, she just stepped down from being director at the camp a few weeks ago at the age of 88, having served the camp for almost 50 years.

Now, having served with her at the camp on and off over the last 15 years, I've had the opportunity to have several conversations on various topics with her. And one of the conversations that I had with her on numerous occasions involved our shared frustration with the enthusiasm and excitement of the crowds at concerts and sporting events, including Christians especially, versus our excitement and enthusiasm during our church services. The point being, we are willing to put on our jerseys, paint our faces, invite our friends over for the big game and then yell and scream and celebrate a game that, in reality, doesn't mean anything and then we come to church, if we have nothing better to do or when we feel like it, find our seat and barely make a peep of praise to the God who has done everything for us.

What do you think God thinks about this type of attitude toward worshipping Him? Think of it this way. How do you feel when you receive a gift that clearly took no thought or effort? There's a subtle, if not outright disappointment, isn't there? It implies that you aren't worth the time or the effort for something special. The same is true with what we give as our worship to God.

In our passage today, God's people are not just giving a thoughtless gift, they are directly insulting the Creator of the Universe with their half-heartedness. As we learned last week in the introduction, the Lord gave Malachi a message for His people who had returned from exile in Babylon. They were back in their land, the Temple was rebuilt, but the initial fire and zeal had faded into routine and religious apathy. They were just going through the motions, and God had noticed.

The core issue at hand is the attitude of the heart behind worship. God is not honored when He is treated as insignificant. And to see how the people were treating Him this way I invite you to please stand with me, if you are able, in honor of God's Word this morning as I read from the Book of Malachi 1:6-14. Let's hear the Word of the Lord together. [Read Passage]

The first point that is being made here is that God deserves our adoration and reverence in vs. 6-8. And God starts out by using two powerful metaphors, comparing Himself to both a father and a master. In ancient times, these roles commanded absolute, unquestioning respect and honor and God begins His argument with this point they could all agree on.

But what starts as affirmation, quickly turns to rebuke, for God goes on to say, "If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord

of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name.” So God accuses the priests, the leaders of worship, of not giving to God the honor they would have given to an earthly father or an earthly master.

In fact, God goes even further in saying that they actually “despise,” or “have contempt” for his name. This goes beyond taking God for granted. God sees that they regard him as worthless, as someone unworthy of their time and talent, someone undeserving of their best. But apparently this comes as a shock to the priests, who have been going through the motions in their sacrifices, “But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’” They’re caught unawares. The priests don’t know the deadness of their worship. They only see what they want to see.

I’m sure we’re all familiar with the phrase, “contempt of court.” Someone charged with contempt of court has either disrespected or failed to obey a court order. Likewise, these priests have shown contempt for God, a far greater offense, being guilty of the charge of despising His name, of dishonoring it.

So the priest ask, “How are we doing this?” And then the answer is given, “By offering "polluted food" on the altar.” (v. 7) God, through the His law, had explicit requirements for offerings. They had to be without blemish and the "firstfruits" of the flock. This wasn't because God needed perfect meat for the sacrifice. It was because the offering was an outward symbol of an inward heart attitude. It showed that God was the priority in their lives, that the best was set aside for Him, and that He was worthy of their worship.

But the priests and the people were bringing blind, lame, and sick animals for sacrifice. Really, what they were doing was bringing what didn't mean anything to them, the animals they couldn't sell, the ones they didn't want, their “re-gifts” and the “leftovers” of their lives. And they were even rationalizing their behavior and were saying, “The Lord’s table “may be” despised” (v. 7). In other words, “we're doing it because we can,” or “It doesn't matter, God will take anything.”

This is a stark warning for us. We may not bring sick and lame animals to an altar anymore, but we can bring God the leftovers of our time, energy, and resources. We give Him the tired end of our day when we've scrolled social media for hours. We'll throw a few dollars in the offering plate while spending lavishly on other things that interest us. We offer shallow, distracted worship when we come to church complaining about how long we have to be here and then leave feeling like we have done our part for the week. This is no different than bringing sick and lame animals to the altar for sacrifice.

He continues on with another rhetorical question, “Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts.” Of course not. But this question is really meant to get the people thinking. They’re trying to pass off to God what they would never pass off to someone in authority. Meaning, they do not see God as God. They do not see him as authoritative, as having the power of life and death over them. In vs. 6-8, we see that those offering God worthless things in the name of worship reveal hearts of indifference and inconsideration for God. They did not honor or revere Him.

This then leads us to the second point of this passage which is the danger of this worthless worship leads us to. The result of this half-heartedness on behalf of the people is that their worship is done in vain, or literally “worthless.” God doesn't accept it. Look at vs. 9: “And now, entreat favor from God that he may be gracious to us... With such offerings

from your hands, will he show favor to any of you?" The answer is a clear, a resounding no. You cannot bring God garbage and expect His favor.

The point being, just as you would not expect favor from the governor, from the previous verse, if you presented him with such offerings, why do you ask God's favor asking Him to pour out His grace on us when you present to Him blemished sacrifices. In other words, Do you really think that God will receive you kindly with the kind of sacrifices you are offering Him? Is not the LORD of hosts greater than your governor, yet you fear your governor, who is human, more than you fear the LORD who is the sovereign, absolute Ruler of the universe.

In vs. 10, God expresses a powerful, shocking desire: "Oh, that one of you would shut the doors, that you would not light useless fires on my altar!" The LORD wishes that there was one faithful priest among them that would see what they were doing was not pleasing to God, was not an act of obedience, was not worshipping God with a true heart and that they would shut the gates to the temple courtyard where the altar stood, that they would shut down the temple, that they would not kindle a fire on the altar. Rather than continue to insult God with their polluted sacrifices, it would be better to shut down the temple, bring an end to the temple services. They lit the altar fire in vain each day, their sacrifices were doing more harm than good. God was not pleased with them, and He was not accepting any offerings from them.

Think about what God is saying here. God would rather have silence than hypocrisy. He prefers an empty church building to a full one filled with people going through empty, meaningless motions. He is not interested in religious rituals performed out of duty or habit and without a passionate heart of devotion. May this never be said of us, and may we never come to find the doors of this church locked because it was better for us not to even meet than to offer meaningless worship to God. Lord help us!

### III. The Majesty of the Great King (Malachi 1:11-14)

Lest we forget who it is we are dealing with, God reminds us of who He is in the last few verses of this passage. While His own chosen people are treating Him with contempt, God declares that His name will be great among the nations. Listen to what God says in vs. 11. [Read]

God is a great God and His name will be great in all the world, across the globe, among all the nations. He has displayed great love to us and has shown us how great he is. He is a great God that is worthy of worship and praise across the whole earth by the whole creation.

But now, look at vs. 12. [Read] God's greatness is dishonored in the world when we do not value him and give him the worship he deserves. Think about how true this is. What does the world learn about God when he hold him in contempt? What does the world learn about God's glory and greatness when we only give God the leftovers? What does the world think about God when we do not honor him with our lives? What does the world think about God if he does not have the highest priority and highest value in the hearts and lives of us those who claim to be His people? God is a great God. But does God look like a great God with the way we treat him?

And how were the people treating him? Look at vs. 13. The people say, "What a weariness this is!" They say that worship is a weariness and they snort at having to give it. I

am going to read some other translations to underscore the feelings and thinking of these people who are supposed to be the people of God. The NIV reads, "What a burden!" The CSB reads, "Look, what a nuisance!" The NASB reads, "See, how tiresome it is!" What a burden to worship God! What a weariness! What a pain! How tiresome it is to have to worship and serve this great God! Do you think that God will respond to us with favor and grace when this is our point of view? God says that he will not. Should God receive what we do not want to give?

When worshipping God feels like a tedious obligation rather than a joyful response to His grace, our hearts are in the same place as the people in Malachi's day. Brothers and sisters, it is shocking how we act like worship is such a burden. We act like we don't want to be here. We try to get here as late as possible and leave as soon as possible. We try to give as little as possible and hope that somehow God is pleased with what we have given to him.

As the priests continued bringing sacrifices that were lame or sick, or even stolen, notice it says "taken by violence," they come to the conclusion, "What a weariness this is," because they had forgotten the object of their worship, their great God and King as God is described in vs. 14. He is the Lord Almighty, the sovereign ruler of the universe. As king he deserves our awe, our reverence, and our very best. We are not approaching a peer, a friend, or a casual acquaintance. When we come into his presence in worship we are approaching the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

This passage challenges us to move beyond religious apathy and convenience. God deserves our best because He is the best. He is a great King, our loving Father, and our sovereign Master.

The truth is, God does not receive our worship if we are not wanting to honor him. We despise the Lord when we give him our leftovers. We show contempt for the Lord when we only give him what we do not want. If God is not your passion, then according to the word of God your worship is useless.

For worship is an overflow of the heart. We will not want to worship the Lord if we do not see him as a great God. We will give God our leftovers when we do not see him as a great king. God isn't offended because he needs what we have because he already has all things and anything we have to offer is His already. It's about priority. When we give God what's broken, useless, and left-over, we're communicating to Him and to the world what we think he's worth. We're attaching a value to God, and saying, "You're only worth this much." It's an issue of heart.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Worship is more than what we do on a Sunday morning. Our lives are to be a worship to the Lord. Your life is to show that God is a great God.

We need to ask ourselves, "Are we despising the Lord?" "Are we offering him our leftovers?" "Is he a great God in our lives?" and "Do we show him that he is a great God and a great King with how we live our lives?" This passage is a reminder for us to examine our

attitude towards our worship of God and to ensure that it reflects a genuine reverence for God, rather than being a routine or meaningless ritual. Again, may God help us to examine ourselves properly and, if need be, return to a true heart of worship. Let's pray.

Benediction: “To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen” – Jude 24-25