

Malachi 1:6-14 — Where Is My Honor?

February 4, 2018

I don't know how many of us watch the news. If you are watching the same programs I see, you probably find yourself frustrated with the political scene in our country. I am not siding with a particular party. I am simply talking about the way people treat one another in government and the media. Today, there is a lack of respect. I grew up believing that even if you don't agree with someone, you respect him as a person and you respect the position he holds. That doesn't take place any more. Does anyone find this lack of respect and honor in the media and across the aisle in our government troubling? If you do, this morning's study will be something you enjoy.

Today, there isn't just a lack of honor in politics and the media but honor is also missing in the church among God's people. How do Christians live disrespectful, dishonoring lives? That is the answer we will discover.

If you are new, it is good to have you at the CrossWinds Spirit Lake campus. We are in the second week of our study in the book of Malachi. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. Last week, we learned the background of the book. The book was written around 450 B.C. When the book was written, life was hard for God's people. The Israelites were conquered by Babylon and their nation was destroyed. They were exiled in Babylon for 70 years due to their sin. As God foretold through the prophet Jeremiah, God would be gracious to them in spite of their sin. God raised up Cyrus — King of Persia, to conquer Babylon and set God's people free. Things unfolded exactly as God decreed. Cyrus conquered Babylon and in 538 B.C. decreed the Jews could return to their land

and begin rebuilding their nation. In 536 B.C. the first Jews left to begin rebuilding their nation and the city of Jerusalem. Rebuilding was hard. It was a slow, discouraging process. There were constant financial shortages, leadership challenges and opposition from the nations around them. When Malachi was written, the nation was approximately 80 years into the rebuilding process. The temple was completed but worship was empty and routine. As a nation, they faced drought, pestilence and harassment from neighboring nations. The nation was falling apart morally and spiritually. It is in that hopeless time, when life was hard and everybody was depressed, that God called Malachi to give these words to God's people in this book.

Last week, in the first five verses of the book, God answered the pressing question on everyone's mind: "Life is tough. If God loved me, why is he allowing these hard times to happen to me?" Has anyone else asked this question when life is difficult?

Last week, God answered that question by saying, "I do love you. I have always loved you." God said, "I love you so much that my love for the rest of the world is like hatred in comparison to how I love you." Last week, we learned that wasn't just a true statement for God's people in Malachi's day, but it is true for us today. God loves us so much that his love for the rest of the world is like hatred in comparison to how he loves us. How can I prove that? Look at the cross. God sent his only son to die for us and save us. How much more can he love us?

Today, the book of Malachi shifts. Malachi says the real question is not, “Does God love you?” But, “Do you love God?” In the rest of the book of Malachi we will see what was really in question was the love of God’s people.

Today, we will see how their lack of love led to them dishonoring God in their lives and worship. As a result, they were not experiencing the life God desired for them. Instead, they were experiencing God’s fatherly discipline. The key to restoring God’s favor in their lives was to repent of the ways they were dishonored God. The same is true today. Restoring God’s favor in our lives involves repenting of the ways our hearts have grown cold and we dishonor our God and king.

God deserves honor, especially from spiritual leaders.

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. 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. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’” Malachi 1:6 (ESV)

Does anybody think children should honor their parents? Children honoring their parents seems essential to life. It is hard to argue against the responsibility children have to honor their parents. Parents stay up at night to feed their children and change their diapers. Parents take their children to summer camp and sport camps. Parents pay for music lessons. Parents feed their children. Parents provide a home for their children. Parents do everything they can to set up their children for success. Parents sacrifice for their children more than anyone else in the world. After all parents do for their kids, it is inconceivable to think children have a right to dishonor their parents.

When I was a youth pastor, there were some high school kids that thought it was cool to call their parents by their first names instead of Mom and Dad. I remember when one of them said, “John, I am going to a movie tonight so I will need to use the family van.” At the time, I was in my early 20s. When I heard him speak that way, I was furious. “That is your father! You are his son. You *must* honor your parents. If you disagree, I have verses.”

“Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. Deuteronomy 5:16 (ESV)

When God promises life will not go well for children that disrespect their parents, you know it is serious. Honor is due so honor must be given.

The same is true in the workplace. How does an employee treat his or her supervisor? The nature of the relationship demands respect. If you talk smack about your boss behind his or her back, it will not go well for you. If you don't respond to your supervisor's requests and employment needs, you are not showing your boss honor. You will not last long. It is essential for an employee to honor their boss and give honor where honor is due.

Just as a child must honor his parents and an employee must honor her employer, as God's children we must honor God because he is our father and our master.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. Hosea 11:1 (ESV)

God calls us his children. He is to be honored and obeyed because he is our father.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 4 (ESV)

God is not our homeboy. God is our master. He is our boss. Paul often called himself a slave of Christ. He calls us our master's servants. God must be honored like a father and and respected like a boss. This is referring to our actions.

The Ten Commandments tell us honoring God is so serious we must be careful how we speak of God's name. This is why the third commandment says we are not to use the Lord's name in vain. We do not use God's name as a swear word. We never speak God's name casually or flippantly because we have a great God who is worthy of so much honor and respect that we even honor the way we speak his name.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Deuteronomy 5:11 (ESV)

In the book of Malachi, we see people were not just treating God's name with a lack of honor but they were dishonoring him in their worship, which is must more serious.

Interestingly, the dishonor of God's name started with a particular group of people — the priests. The priests were the spiritual leaders in the temple. We don't have priests in church but we do have spiritual leaders in church. They are the pastors, elders, and leadership board members. Spiritual leaders in the church are also those leading Awana, youth group, CrossWinds University classes, men's ministry, women's ministry, and Life Group leaders. Those are our spiritual leaders. In Malachi's day, the priests, as the spiritual leaders, were not

holding up the honor of God. In our day, at CrossWinds Church, it is the job of the spiritual leaders to hold up the honor of God and his name.

How were the leaders in the temple allowing God's name to be dishonored? Let's find out.

How do we dishonor God?

We dishonor God by not giving our best.

But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the Lord's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Malachi 1:6b–8a (ESV)

The honor we show to God is seen by what we give to God in worship. In the Old Testament, they were in a sacrificial system. Debit cards weren't invented so people gave God their grain and animals. The spiritual leaders were allowing the people to bring inferior grain and animals. The text calls it polluted food. That means rotten food.

How often do you buy fresh strawberries? We rarely purchase them. By the time we get around to eating all of them, they have green fuzzy beards. The rotten fruit goes in the garbage. We have the same problem with bananas. We only buy three at a time. If we buy more, we end up with rotten bananas and fruit flies all over the kitchen. The people in Malachi's day are saying, "Don't throw out the rotten bananas and bearded strawberries. Bring them to church. Give them to God."

If you were God, how would you feel about moldy strawberries and rotten bananas in the offering plate? If I was God, I would be charging my lightning

batteries if people were putting their garbage in the offering plate, not the garbage can. It is disrespectful.

The people in Malachi's day were not just giving rotten food offerings but they were giving rotten animal offerings. They were offering God the blind, lame and sick animals. They were giving to God the animals that were worth nothing.

I want to talk with the kids this morning. How many of you would love a puppy? Everybody loves a puppy. Imagine it was Christmas and for Christmas your parents gave you a puppy. The problem is the puppy they gave is blind. The dog can't play fetch. The dog can't see the ball. The puppy has no idea where he is in the house. He just slams into the kitchen cabinets and falls down the stairs. The puppy doesn't hit the wall fast because the puppy is also lame. He only has three legs. The puppy can only hobble. This puppy is also sick. He is foaming at the mouth. He vomits on the carpet everything you feed him and has diarrhea all over the place. This is known as diarrhea dog.

Parents, is that the kind of puppy you want to give your kids? Absolutely not! Since you love your kids, you only want the best puppy for your kids. If parents love their children so much they will only give the best animal as a pet, what does it say about someone's feelings toward God when they offer him a blind, lame, and sick animal?

The Bible specifically tells the priest in the Old Testament that the only offerings that were acceptable from the people were the best offerings.

But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God. Deuteronomy 15:21 (ESV)

Why did God not accept trashy offerings? If what I give to God isn't worth anything, I am saying God isn't worth anything. God is the best. He deserves my best. When I give God what is second-rate or worthless, it shows a lack of respect and honor for God.

You see what we give for our offering is a reflection of our hearts. It is a visual statement of how we truly feel about God. The Bible tells us there is an inseparable connection between our giving and our hearts.

[For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21 \(ESV\)](#)

I want us to notice what God said about their rotten food and defective animals. He didn't compliment them on being cheap and saving money. He said the reason people are giving their leftovers for worship is because they are evil. That is strong words.

I know everyone is thankful we are not under the sacrificial system. We don't have to worry about giving rotten fruit, moldy bread and lame animals because Jesus was our once-for-all sacrifice. That doesn't take away the principle that the only proper way to honor our great God is by giving him our best. Let me show you some ways we dishonor God by giving him our leftovers.

Tithing. How is your giving? Many Christians practice a tithe, which is giving 10 percent of their income. Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 that we should give, joyfully, sacrificially and generously to God. Our financial giving should be what is first and best as a way of honoring our great God. How is your giving?

Some of you think this is a money sermon. It is not. It is a sermon about our hearts. If we don't honor God by giving joyfully, sacrificially and generously of our money, it is saying our hearts don't value God and want to honor him.

When we say, "I can't afford to tithe," the truth is we are saying, "I don't want to tithe." All we need to do to raise our standard of giving is lower our standard of living. By refusing to give we are saying the one who saved us, forgave us of our sins and transformed us from objects of his fully deserving wrath in the lake of fire to being the ones that receive the most blessing and honor in the universe is not worth honoring by a few dollars from our paychecks.

All true worship involves sacrifice. If something costs you nothing, it is not worship. The greater the financial sacrifice given to God, the more honor shown to God.

Energy. God is worth our best energy. When I was in college, I used to stay up late Saturday night; after all, who doesn't? Sunday morning in church, I would fall asleep. I was also thinking about the movie I saw the night before and wasn't paying attention to anything the pastor taught. If church was a class, I would have failed. I came to church late and completely exhausted. The problem is God was not honored when I gave God the leftovers of my life Sunday morning. We have a great God who deserves our best energy and best focus. Sunday is to be the best day of the week. God convicted me of giving the leftovers of my life in worship. I began going to bed earlier on Saturday nights. Some of us need to respond to this message by simply going to bed at a reasonable hour on Saturday night. God gave his best. He deserves our best.

Bible study. When it comes to our personal Bible reading time, do we give God our best time or the leftover time when it comes to reading and studying God's Word? Some of you read your Bible as the last thing in your day. That may work for you. For most of us, that is the worst time of day. We are so exhausted that we can't make it through a paragraph before nodding off. I don't know about you but I am walking around the house in a coma of weariness by 10:30 p.m. That is not a good Bible reading time. If I want to give God my best energy for Bible study, it is in the morning with a cup of tea. God is worth getting up early. Giving him the best time of my day is a way to honor him.

We dishonor God when we serve him with a bad attitude.

But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord. Malachi 1:12–13 (ESV)

In this passage, Malachi repeated some of the sinful actions of the spiritual leaders but he also moved from their actions to their attitudes. They were weary of their work. They whined about their work. They snorted at their work. Do you know what it means to snort at something? This is what a teenager does when you ask him to empty the dishwasher. He snorts and rolls his eyes with a bad attitude.

Can you hear these priests? "I can't believe it is time for worship again. My job is terrible. I have to work every weekend. Most people get to sleep in. I have to get up early. Most people get to come to the house of worship to relax. I have to work." They snort and whine all over the place.

The truth is these priests viewed their job the wrong way. Instead of seeing it as a burden to serve in God's house, they needed to see it as a privilege to serve in God's house. They didn't have to serve. They got to serve. The priests were chosen by God to be the intermediary between God and his people. That job may be hard but it is a privilege to be chosen. What could be better than being chosen by God to offer the sacrifices for the people and to represent God to the world? What an honor! Do they make special sacrifices? Yes. Priests that have a whining attitude that think of their job as a burden are dishonoring to God.

This transfers right into life in the church. There is one God and savior in the universe. We have the privilege of worshipping and serving him. The spiritual leaders at CrossWinds have the privilege of representing the greatness of God to the world. Is it extra work to serve in the church? Yes. It is also a privilege and honor to serve.

If you serve our great God in the coffee bar, it means you have to get up a little earlier on Sunday morning. After all God has done for us to save us and honor us, it is a privilege to honor Christ by making the small sacrifice of getting up a little earlier on Sunday morning to serve and love his people.

Those of you who serve God on the worship team have a similar situation. Serving on the worship team can be hard. It means you stay for two services. It means you practice during the week. Is it extra work? Yes. Don't snort at it and call it a burden. It is a privilege to have the skills to lead God's people in worship. It is an honor to be used by God to lead others in worship and praise of God's great name. Don't think you have to be on the worship team. It is a great privilege

that you get to be on the worship team. It is not a burden. It is a privilege. Jesus made you into a new person. Jesus forgave our sin. We are the most blessed beings in the universe. What a great privilege to serve our great God. What a small sacrifice to make to help other people praise and honor him.

How will the world see the greatness of our savior and be drawn to the greatness of our God if we whine and snort when we have the privilege to serve?

God is dishonored when we don't fulfill our commitments.

Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations. Malachi 1:14 (ESV)

What happened in Malachi's day is people publicly promised to give God a great sacrifice but when it came time to pay up, they exchanged the great animal they committed to give with an inferior substitute. By going back on their commitments to God, their actions said God is not worth keeping a promise for. God was greatly dishonored by people who made commitments to him but didn't keep those commitments. In fact, God feels so strongly about this he says these people were cursed for failing to keep their public commitments to God.

While this is primarily referring to Old Testament sacrifices, in principle it refers to our New Testament life. We too make commitments to Christ and his church then we casually break those promises to give less than we committed to. How does this happen?

How many times have we agreed to serve on a committee, board or ministry team but when life gets busy and meetings are inconvenient, we skip the meeting. We break the commitment. Why can't we come to the meeting? Our

favorite sports team is playing. Our friend asked us to dinner. We are heading out of town on vacation. How do we justify this in our mind?

It is only church. You don't expect me to take church too seriously. Yes, we do. If we commit to serve on a ministry team or board then we let things creep into our schedules so we don't keep our commitments, we are not honoring God. We are not treating him like the king of the universe. When it comes to the one who gave his best for us, the only appropriate response is giving our best to him. He deserves to be honored in our commitments and schedules. How will the world see the greatness of our God and savior if following through on our commitments to him and his church aren't a priority?

What are the results of dishonoring God?

Dishonoring God leads to God ignoring our prayers.

Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 1:9 (ESV)

Malachi said, "God is not honored by half-hearted, second-rate sacrifices. Try that with your governor and see how well it goes." Imagine Governor Kim Reynolds came to Spirit Lake, Iowa. She came because we were going to ask for a special government grant to help our school system. As part of her visit to Spirit Lake, she planned to enjoy lunch with the school board. Everyone on the school board was served a nice sandwich, but for Governor Reynolds, we gave her those rotten strawberries with the fuzzy green beard. We gave her a moldy sandwich that we found in the back of a junior high locker. To drink we gave her a carton of chunky school milk that was out of the refrigerator for a week so it

smelled like a pair of dirty socks on a hot summer day. How impressed would she be with her lunch while the school board was eating a catered meal? I guarantee you she will not approve the school funding request because she was dishonored when the school board didn't give her their best but instead gave her their leftover trash.

Malachi said, "It works the same way with God. Don't expect God to jump at answering your prayer requests when what we give God in worship is an inferior offering, second-rate energy with a whiny attitude and broken commitments."

Some of you have been praying for something for a while. Maybe it is a spouse. Maybe it is a better job. Maybe it is a close friend. You wonder why God hasn't responded favorably. How is your giving? How is your serving?

If we don't take God seriously, don't expect him to take our prayers seriously. Let me show you an example of this from Genesis.

In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering... Genesis 4:3-4 (ESV)

Why did God look with favor on Abel's offering instead of Cain's? One of the reasons is because of what they brought. Cain brought an offering of some fruits of the land. Cain didn't bring anything special. It was not the best of things.

What Abel brought was different. He brought animals that were the firstborn in his flock. The portion of the animal he brought was the fat portion.

Abel brought what was first and what was best. Cain just brought something. Abel brought what was first and best because he knew that is what God deserves. That is why God showed favor to Abel's offering but did not show

favor to Cain's offering. Nothing has changed. God looks favorably upon us when we give what is first in our lives and what is best in our lives.

Dishonoring God leaves Him disgusted with my worship.

Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. Malachi 1:10 (ESV)

Malachi gives people a window into how God feels about half-hearted worship when his people whine because they have to serve him. In short, God is disgusted by half-hearted worship. God said he wished somebody would have the courage to shut the doors of the temple and send everybody home. God wishes they wouldn't take the offering but burn the offering because half-hearted worship is completely repulsive.

We miss the significance of God's words. Today, we have a church on every corner. If one church shuts down, there are five to take its place. This was the temple. There was only one temple in the world. The priesthood, the temple and its sacrifices were the only way anyone could come to God. To shut down the temple was to cut off the relationship between God and people. Yet, God was so disgusted by people going through the empty motions of worship and offering rotten fruit, moldy bread and blind animals that he said he wished somebody had the guts to shut the entire place down. Those are strong words.

I know some of you think God was overreacting. God should be grateful you are here. At least you are in church. You may be texting during the sermon, but you are here. You checked Instagram and Snapchat four times this morning, but at least you sang for worship. "God, you should be thankful I am here. I have other places I could be right now."

To help you understand why God is so repulsed when we don't give our best with our finances, our time, our attitudes, and our energy,; let me remind you the Bible says the relationship between Christ and his church is like the relationship between a husband and wife. The love, devotion and intimacy we should experience in marriage is to whet our appetites for the much greater love, devotion and intimacy that is to exist between Christ and his people. Flip this to marriage and let's think this though.

Imagine you are a husband and were away on business. You came home after being gone a few weeks and you walk in the door. You can't wait to see your wife. Unfortunately, when you walk in the door, she is watching television. She hears you come in the door but she never takes her eyes off her program. She just mumbles, "Hello." You were hoping she would get off the couch, wrap her arms around you and give you a big kiss, but that didn't happen. For dinner that night, she opened a bag of tacos from Taco John's. You had been looking forward to a home-cooked meal because you ate fast food for a week on the road. Instead of a healthy home-cooked meal, you had tacos with the grease dripping down your elbows. After dinner, you sit on the couch. Finally, your bride sits next to you. This is the moment you were waiting for when you came in the door. You finally have time together. Instead of talking to you, she whips out her phone and calls a friend. She sits next to you but ignores you as she talks about trivial stuff with her girlfriend. Finally, bedtime arrives. You are looking forward to being with your wife — just the two of you — in an undistracted way that is only

possible in your bedroom. The two of you lay down. The lights go out and you wrap your arms around her because you are finally alone.

Suddenly there is a glow in the room. Her cell phone breaks the visual peace of bedtime. She is checking Facebook! No matter how much you pay attention to her, she doesn't care to pay attention to you.

Finally, you can't stand it. Completely heartbroken you hop out of bed and say, "This is disgusting." Your wife says, "What's wrong? I greeted you when you came home. I made dinner. I sat on the couch with you. I let you snuggle in bed. What's the problem?" You say, "A half-hearted passionless relationship is disgusting. It's killing me!"

God says the same thing. "I love you so much that my love for the rest of the world is like hatred in comparison to how I love you. I gave you my own son. Going through the motions of worship doesn't honor me. It disgusts me. Genuinely loving me, which is shown when you give your best, is what honors me." Just like you show your love to your spouse by giving them what is first and what is best with your giving, your energy, and your time, we show our love for God by giving him what is first of our giving, energy and time. It is an honor and a privilege to serve in Christ's church, not a sacrifice to snort at.

Dishonoring God moves us outside of God's plan to spread the greatness of his name in this world.

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 1:11 (ESV)

God's plan is from the rising of the sun to its setting— that means in the entire world — God's name will be honored and will be revered. People of every race, nation, language and color will give honor and glory to God. They will give him their best because God gave us his best. He gave us his son, how can we not honor him by giving him our best?

The way this applies to us is clear. God is committed to the honor of his name around the world. When people or a church become like the people of Israel in Malachi's day, and they are content to give God the leftovers in their lives, God will call them to repentance like he did in this book. If they refuse to repent, God will move to a different church and a different people that will give him the honor and glory he deserves.

This morning, we need to ask ourselves, as Christians, are we honoring God by the way we worship him? Do we give offerings that are our first and our best? When we worship, do we come spent and exhausted? When we study and pray, is it only from our emotional leftovers? What is our attitude when we serve Christ and his church? Do we see it as an immense privilege or a burden? Are we keeping the commitments we make to Christ and his kingdom or are we comfortable substituting something less?

We have a great God, great savior, and great king. At CrossWinds Church, may our lives and church always give him nothing less than the honor he deserves.



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