

Malachi

The role of the Prophet is to speak the truth whether you want to hear it or not.

The role of the prophet is to serve as the messenger of God.

Our modern day prophets, and no one should presume to be one,
should speak not out of their own frustrations or judgement.

They speak the mind of God.

As a pastor, I am charged by God to say sometimes what I am not comfortable saying.

What I wouldn't say to you over dinner.

But I must say at the pulpit.

So hear now the prophesy of Malachi - the messenger of God.

For that is what his name means.

The Deepest Dark

I have loved you. (1:2-3)

² *"I have loved you," says the LORD.*

"But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob, ³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

Do you really believe God Loves you?

Unconditional, Unmerited

The note about Esau is not about God's partiality and favoritism.

It is about God's grace and mercy - he chooses the unexpected.

Jacob is not a great hero of faith.

He has issues - big ones.

A liar, a cheat, selfish.

That is who God has chosen to love.

God keeps his promises to Abraham.

Tell of a time when you felt undeserved love.

Pretend Faith

Where is the respect due me? (1:6-8)

⁶ *"A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty.*

"It is you priests who show contempt for my name.

"But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'

⁷ *"By offering defiled food on my altar.*

"But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?'

"By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible. ⁸ When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty."

"Parody of Modern Church Service"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RJbd8zE48A>

This is a parody of what we have turned worship into in our culture.

It is in fact worthy of parody.

What did early church worship look like?

In fact, I doubt God really cares about our elaborate or down home liturgies in worship.

In fact, I know he doesn't care.

Jesus' instructions is that God wants us to worship him in spirit and in truth.

This means: 1. Spirit - all our being - thought, words, motives, deeds.

2. Truth - in reality - with right knowledge of God for who he is - even in his mysteries.

The Israelites were going through the motions, loving the sound of their own voices.

They went to the temple but then in their lives acted cruelly and selfishly.

Specifically, Malachi focuses on how the husbands and men of their time treated women and their wives as objects of contempt.

God hates pretend faith.

It is the true violation of the commandment, "Do not use the LORD's name in vain."

It is blasphemy - not only with what you say but how you live.

You really don't believe in God.

The Pot & The Kettle: The Unjust Seek Justice

You have wearied the LORD with your words. (2:17)

¹⁷ *You have wearied the LORD with your words.*

"How have we wearied him?" you ask.

By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?"

This is true hypocrisy.

The thought of false faith is that God rewards evil.

How corrupt is that?

Not only is God considered not just, but that he is complicit in evil.

One looks upon the evil or even mere faults of others without recognizing the irony of their own sin.

"Oho!" said the pot to the kettle;

"You are dirty and ugly and black!

Sure no one would think you were metal,

Except when you're given a crack."

"Not so! not so!" kettle said to the pot;

"'Tis your own dirty image you see;

For I am so clean – without blemish or blot –

That your blackness is mirrored in me."

—*Maxwell's Elementary Grammar, 1904*

No one is sinless.

And to say God is evil is a descent beyond blasphemy.

This is in fact, the deception of Satanism - Satan is the hero who resists and unjust God.

This is the unpardonable sin Jesus speaks of.

To blaspheme the Holy Spirit by saying that God's work is demonic.

Robbing God: What you do with Money Matters

Return to me and I will return to you. (3:6-10)

⁶ *"I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.*

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

⁸ *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.*

"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'

"In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

I don't often speak on this but I will and must.

When was the last time you tithed?

When you gave 10% of what you earned to the church?

The person who prepares all the tax receipts in this church is me.

In other words, I know how much people in this church give.

I will never disclose how much anyone gives.

But I will tell you straight that doing the tax forms every year
is both the most humbling and humiliating exercise of the year.

I see people who give faithfully whether they have a little or a lot.

These people humble me with their faithfulness.

I see the people who give little to the church and they encourage me.

I see people give nothing to the church and they sadden me.

I show no favoritism and you know it, whether you give little or a lot.

This is because I serve God and not you.

You do not pay for my services as an exchange.

When you give you enable our local church to serve Gods purposes.

This is not a country club with benefits.

I tithe and more not because God judge me of robbing him.

But because it is good for my soul.

I tithe more than I spend on myself.

If you are not giving, I do not judge you - that isn't my place.

I pity you.

I pity you and worry for your soul.

Jesus has taught us - where your treasure is, there your heart is.

What are your investing your money in?

For Jesus , this isn't a private matter.

He and his disciples were in the temple and saw how much a widow gave.

And while the disciples may have laughed at how little she gave,

Jesus knew that for her it was significant.

I don't know exactly how to feel when I see a child in our congregation give more of their own money
to a Christian organization than some of you give to the church all year.

And this child still tithes to our church.

Are you feeling guilty? Please don't.
Guilt doesn't get us anywhere because it is a vague bad feeling about ourselves.
Instead, you should feel convicted.
Because true conviction leads to concrete constructive action.

Why didn't the Israelites give?
because they didn't believe in God.
Because they didn't think it matter to God.
That it didn't affect their souls.
They were wrong.

Futile Faith: An Excuse for Disbelief

You have spoken arrogantly. (3:13-14)

¹³ *"You have spoken arrogantly against me," says the LORD.*

"Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?'

¹⁴ *"You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?' ¹⁵ But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.'"*

Why believe in Go when you don't believe it makes a difference?
And so we remain religious, affiliated because, why not?
It's a social construct, a communal place in a confusing world.
A place where I can belong.
But we fail to realize that it is about whom we belong to.

So on Palm Sunday we reflect on how we can welcome Jesus without making him King.
We want a kingdom of our own but we don't want the king.
Cynical, jaded, complacent, apathetic - these are the places Malachi calls us out of.
It's what makes us able to crucify Jesus and deny him.
But the jig is up.
God knows.

The Remnant (3:16-17)

¹⁶ *Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.*

¹⁷ *"On the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.*

This is in fact the last book of the Old Testament.
It is followed by what is known as the 300 years of silence.
It is not because God is silent and not active,
but because no more words or messages from God are recorded as Scripture.
The power houses of Assyria, Babylon and Persia will fall.
The world powers shift to Greece, Alexander the Great (who was an Empire builder an not really so great),

to this general after his death and finally the rise of Rome.
Human history shifts quickly.
People forget but God does not.
He not only remembers but he acts.
At the height of the Roman Empire and Graeco-Roman culture,
Jesus is born, lives, dies, is resurrected and ascends.
This Jesus calls the remnant to himself and builds the church.
And he says of this new people, the church of all nations, will not be overcome by the gates of hell.

But there is always a remnant.
A people who declare themselves as belonging to him.
The disciples Jesus called, the 12 and the 70,
who disciples for hundred of years and many generations.
The 2000 year history of the church has seen corruption & faithlessness.
Do not think that in our short lives we are beyond complacency.
Will we be counted among the remnant or among the faithless?
We need to soberly think upon who we are and why we live the way we do.

Malachi ends with a warning - there is a way of destruction and there is a way of life.
There are things we cannot change and do not have a choice in.
But in his matter of love and allegiance, we do.