

Bring No More Vain Offerings

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 0 0] Let us join together in the worship of God, singing to his praise from Psalm 119 and from the opening verses of the psalm. Psalm 119 and verse 1, Blessed are they that undefiled and strayed are in the way, who in the Lord's most holy law do walk and do not stray.

Blessed are they who to observe whose statutes are inclined, and who do seek the living God with their whole heart and mind. Such in whose ways do walk, and they do no iniquity.

Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts carefully. For that thy statutes to observe thou wouldst my ways direct, then shall I not be shamed when I thy precepts all respect.

Then with integrity of heart thee will I praise and bless, when I the judgments all have learned of thy pure righteousness.

That I will keep thy statutes all firmly resolved have I. O do not then, most gracious God, forsake me utterly.

[1 : 2 5] Psalm 119, verses 1 through to 8. Blessed are they that undefiled are straight and in the way. Blessed are they that undefiled are straight and in the way.

Who in the Lord's most holy law do not stray. Who in the Lord's most holy law do not stray.

Blessed are they who do not stray. Blessed are they that and who do not stray. Blessed are they that and who do not stray.

Blessed are they that and who do not stray. ABD live in the way. In the bereink of Christ.

Now what Chelsea do not stray. Heavenly ■■■üm Thine grace and care for me.

[3 : 1 6] O Lord, thy straddle's good altar, Thine woes, I wish, thy day.

Then cry, thy door ■■■ed me, When are thy BC national Annie, Then wath and pain beset thee of harm, He will my peace and rest When I the just friends of other All thy pure righteousness But I will keep thy status

On heavenly rest of my life O do not have those gracious And God, Lord, say me and Harry Let us come before God in prayer.

Let us pray. Ever-blessed God, we would seek your help in order that as we come to worship, that our worship would be in accordance with your own guiding hand, that you would bless us as we come by enabling us to come as we ought.

We are created to worship And we forget that Because worship is something that That is Often a chore Something that That we We do Without Being persuaded of the validity of it Or the necessity for it Or even The purpose that lies at its heart That is the way we are by nature But you have given to us as your people That spirit of worship And we pray that even as the psalmist Whose words we were Reading and That were on the lips of those who Who worshipped you With these words of praise That with integrity of heart

[6 : 32] Their desire was to Praise and bless Your name But that is not always the case And we know that to be so Even a few people Who bore your name In the Wilderness They came To the Almighty God Who had Redeemed them from The slavery of Egypt But they had neglected to Maintain Their relationship with you And Had drifted from you As is often the case They adopted a posture of worship And with their mouth They flattered you And unto the God of truth We are told With their false tongues They lied Although their words were good Their heart Was not sincere

And that is what we are Reminded of in your word That we can have such a An attitude Outwardly that Seems Suitable But in reality It is not as it ought And as the passage That we are to consider Today Reminds us We need your help To come as we ought So help us to pray Help us to worship In spirit and in truth Help us to call upon Your name Out of our heart That is Truly consecrated To that purpose We bring before Your cares and concerns And commit Ourselves to your blessing Knowing that if you bless us We are blessed indeed And those you have Ordained for destruction That is not something That they can shun or avoid We pray that you would remember Your people in particular

As they live in this world You have taken them to yourself You have redeemed them And enabled them by your grace To embrace Jesus Christ As he is freely offered in the gospel And as they endeavour to live In his name in this world They are always tempted And always Surrounded with challenges We pray that you would remember All who Are In such a situation Even today We bring before you All who are under your hand In sickness We are mindful of the Many that have Ailments to contend with Of different kinds While we are in the midst Of a pandemic We acknowledge that Some have succumbed to that But the ongoing situation Is Equally To be remembered That

Because we are in a world That is Full of sin There are ways In which we must Bring our cares And concerns To you When we suffer The brokenness of body And mind That accompanies sin Not because we are Any more sinful Than any others But because It is An accompaniment To That which Took place In the fall So we remember In your presence All who are In need today Those who are in hospital Being cared for By others Those who are being cared In their own homes By others Those who have Fears to contend with Because of their illnesses We bring them before you On the shoulders of prayer And ask that you would Remind them of who you are That you are the great physician

And that you are able to do for them What no other can So bless the sick And the suffering Throughout the world Remember our own congregation here And all that we know of That are unwell Those who are housebound Or hospitalised Those who Have to be remembered In prayer Remember those who are Grieving at the present And we Bring them before you And ask that you would Assuage their grief We remember at this present time The Queen Our Queen Who is Under the shadow of grief Because you have Taken from her Her partner in life One who Stood by her side For all of her reign And we would pray That you would Encourage her To look beyond Her present situation To the one who is The ever present help In time of trouble A friend born for adversity

[11 : 36] One who is The saviour of sinners And may he be Her redeemer At this time also Bless their family Children and grandchildren And great-grandchildren We pray for them all And ask that you would Sanctify this To them And to us As a nation If prayers are offered And indeed they are Being offered May the hearer of prayer Answer prayer By pouring out the spirit Upon us That we may truly Repent of our sins And turn to the God Who is able to Heal our hearts Remembered Those who govern us Remember those who Are responsible for Carrying out the rule of law In our midst We bring before you All these cares And thankful that we can Leave all in your hands

We pray for those Who are in the world And who are not of the world Whatever they are in the world Nations that know not God And persecute All who would own God As their God We pray that you would Preserve your own Witness in these places And your people Who bear witness to you Thankful for your For their presence Thankful for your saving grace In their experience That their testimony Would shine brightly In the darkness And we know that Even in this corner Of your vineyard While we have much To regret And much to grieve over You are still maintaining The testimony Of your people And as long as You do that And you are prepared To leave us To speak of Christ To others That there is a Potential there For quickening That is necessary

To take place In those who hear Of Christ Company with your spirit All that is done In your name Through the preaching Of your word Wherever it is heard We pray that you would Magnify your name Amongst us So bless us Each one Bless us As those who Would look to your word At this time Grant cleansing From the many sins That are in our heart Pour out your Spirit upon us That we may Know what it is To repent Of our sin And turn And embrace The salvation That is in Christ Hear our petitions Watch over us Each one For giving us In the Redeemer's name Amen We're going to read From the scriptures Of the Old Testament We're going to Hear the word of God As we have it in The book of the prophet Isaiah And we're reading From the first chapter Isaiah chapter 1

Reading from the beginning And we can read Down to verse 20 The vision of Isaiah The son of Amos Which he saw Concerning Judah And Jerusalem In the days of Isaiah Jotham Ahaz And Heseekiah Kings of Judah Hear O heavens And give ear O earth For the Lord Hath spoken I have nourished And brought up Children And they have Rebelled against me The ox knoweth His owner And the ass His master's crib But Israel Doth not know My people Doth not consider A sinful nation A people Laden with iniquity A seed of evildoers Children that are corrupt They have forsaken The Lord They have provoked The Holy One Of Israel Into anger They are gone Away backward Why should you

Be stricken Anymore You will revolt More and more The whole head Is sick And the whole heart Faint From the soul Of the food Even Into the head There is no soundness In it But wounds And bruises And putrefying sores They have not been closed Neither bound up Neither mollified With ointment Your country Is desolate Your cities Are burnt With fire Your land Strangers Devoured In your presence And it is desolate As overthrown By strangers And the daughter Of Zion Is left As a cottage In a vineyard As a lodge In a garden Of cucumbers As a besieged city Except the Lord Of hosts Had left us Unto us A very small remnant We should have been A Sodom And we should have been Like unto Gomorrah

[16 : 42] Hear the word of the Lord Ye rulers of Sodom Give ear unto the law Of your God Ye people of Gomorrah To what purpose Is the multitude Of your sacrifices Unto me Saith the Lord I am full Of the burnt offerings Of rams And the fat Of fed beasts And I delight Not in the blood Of bullocks Or of lambs Or of hay goats When he come To appear Before me Who hath required This at your hand To tread my courts Bring no more Vain oblations Incenses And abomination Unto me The new moons And sabbaths The calling Of assemblies I cannot Away with It is iniquity Even the solemn meeting Your new moons And your appointed feasts My soul Hicteth They are a trouble Unto me I am weary

To bear them And when ye Spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes From you Yea when I make When you make many prayers I will not hear Your hands are full of blood Wash ye Make you clean Put away the evil Of your doings From before mine eyes Cease to do evil Learn to do well Seek judgment Relieve the oppressed Judge the fatherless Plead for the widow Come now And let us reason together Sait the Lord Though your sins Be as scarlet They shall be As white as snow Though they be red Like crimson They shall be As wool If ye be willing And obedient Ye shall eat The good of the land But if ye refuse And repel Ye shall be devoured With the sword For the mouth Of the Lord Hath spoken it And so on

May the Lord At his blessing To this reading Of his word And to his name Be the praise
We can turn again To this passage That we have Read Looking in particular At the words
We have from Verse 10 onwards Hear the word Of the Lord Ye rulers Of Sodom Give ear
Unto the law Of our God Ye people Of Gomorrah To what purpose Is the multitude Of
your sacrifices Unto me Saith the Lord And so on I am sure We have all Had reason To
reflect Upon The nature Of our worship In recent days We were Very much Bound up To
Habit As far as

Our public worship Was concerned We would attend Church Maybe twice On a Sunday
And We would Follow the Pattern Associated with That in our Worship And We Find That
That Habit However Closely We followed It was A habit That was Good and Wholesome
But with The coming Of the Effects Of COVID-19 That Habit of Ours Was disturbed And
We had to Find other Ways By which To worship God And public Worship Was denied Us
And Oftentimes The question Might occur To some At least How valid Is that Worship
What What is it That we Are doing That we Are no Longer

That That we We As a result Of Being denied Public Access To The means Of grace
What are we Doing now That We were Doing That We had Prevented From doing In the
Whole Fullness Of what We were Doing Before If we Have got That in Reverse What
Were we Doing Previously That we Cannot do Now And if What we Are doing Now Is
equally Valid Then Why Would we Be grieved By it Or why Would we Sense loss Over it
Well the Word of God Reminds us That His Worship Is to Be Accomplished According To
his Own Direction And his Word tells Us that We Should not On any

[21 : 44] Account Cease To gather Together In public We know That Such A Counsel Such A
Command Is overridden By The Necessities Of The Physical Well-being And The Health
Of Congregations That If If we If we Present The Word Of God To The Situations That
Confront Us Then We do Have a Duty To Preserve Life We have A duty To Preserve Our
Own And The Lives Of Of Others And If Medical Opinion Tells Us That If We Pursue A
Pattern Of Public Worship That Puts In Jeopardy The

Well-being Of The People That We Do Wrong Now All Of These Things I'm Sure You've
Heard Before But It Introduces Into Our Thinking I Would Hope A Thought Process Where
We Question What Our Worship Entails And How We Are Meant To Come And What God
Is Seeking From Us In Our Worship Now The Scripture Repeatedly Makes Plain To Us
The Nature Of True Religion Again And Again If We Are To Discover What That Is We
Can We Can Find It In The Scripture We Can Find What God Says Concerning The
Nature Of True Religion In The Book Of Deuteronomy For Example And Now Israel What
Did The Lord Thy God Require Of The But To Fear The Lord Thy God To

Walk In All His Ways And To Love Him And To Serve The Lord Thy God With All Thy
Heart With All Thy Soul To Keep The Commandments The Lord For Thy Good God Has
Given Us Express Commands That Direct Us In Our Approach To Him Especially Our
Approach To Him In Worship We Are To Fear The Lord Our God And To Walk In All His
Ways Wherever We Discover That Every Jew Understood What Was Desired By God
They Were Taught That From Their Infancy When Christ Addressed His Followers And
Those Who Were With Him About The

Commandments He Was Asked Which One Was The First Commandment Which Was
The Greatest And One Of The Those Who Were Present Having Been Asked That
Question And Who Were Responsible For Asking That Question Responded To Jesus
Answer With His Own Take On Things He Said There Is One God And There Is None
Other But He And To Love Him With All The Heart And With All The Understanding And
With All The Soul And With All The Strength And To Love His Neighbor As Himself Is
More Than All Whole Burnt Offerings Not Not Not Not Not Not Not Only Was His Answer
To Jesus Commended By Jesus But It Is An Answer

That Takes In Not Only What Is Pleasing To God But What God considers To Be Worthless And Clearly Idolatry Is Condemned The Worship Of False Gods As Well As The Worship Of God In An Improper Way All Manner Of Hypocrisy And Legalism And Ceremonialism And Formalism Are Condemned Now It's Easy For Us To Think Of These Improper Approaches To God As Being The Experience Of The Unbeliever However It Is Possible That Any One Of These Elements Can Grip The Believer As Well And Enter Into The Kind Of Relationship That They Have With God Where They Are Not As They Ought To Be In His Presence There

[26 : 46] Is A Danger That Any One Of Us Can Suck To The Kind Of Worship That Is Divide Of Spiritual Worth Or At Least Is Tarnished Because We Are Not As Whole Heartedly Engaged In It As We Ought What Is To Consider This Passage Thinking About What God Condemns And The Various Ways In Which We Can Experience It In Our Own Lives And Secondly How That Can Impact Upon Our Approach To God If We Look At The Passage Before Us The People Who Are Experiencing God's Displeasure Are Not Religious They Are Not Religious They Don't Like Religion God

God Says to Them To What Purpose Is The Multitude Of Your Sacrifices Unto Me Said The Lord I Am Full Of The Burnt Offerings Of Rams And The Fat Of Beasts Fed Beasts And I Delight Not In The Blood Of Bullocks Or Of Lambs Or He Goats Now That Does Not Make Sense If What Is Being Done Is As It Ought To Be Because These Are The Things That God Has Commanded In His In The Ceremonial Law And In All The Laws That God Has Given To Israel That Are Part Of Their Worship Liturgy The Very Much On The Face Of It Appear To Conform To What God Wants There Is A Multitude Of Sacrifices Many Approaches Are Made With A Measure Of Thought Going Into It Is The Fact Of Fed Beasts It

Is Not Their Lack That Is The Problem But That The Whole Approach Is Not As It Should Be They Are Not Coming To God In The Way That They Ought To Come To God It's Important For Us To Identify What Is True About A Worship That Becomes Simply Formal Formal In The Sense That We Are Just Adopting A Pattern A Form That Is That Is Empty And Divide Of Meaning It Is External What Do Think About That Where It May Encoach Upon Our Own Worship

Whatever Way We Bring Our Worship To God Think About This In This Sense What Is Our Worship What Is It Made Up Of There Is Praise There Is Prayer There Is A Public Element There Is A Private Element And In A Sense Because Of The Current Situation That We Are In Some Of These Things Have Been Affected We Can Read God's Word Privately We Can Meditate And Study And These Are Things That Are Open To Us To Do While Other Doors May Have Shattered Other Doors Have Opened And More Emphasis Falls On The Kind Of Things That We Used To Do I Was Thinking Of Every

One Of Us I Suppose In A Sense As The People Of God In Particular We Supplemented Our Worship What Was Expected Of Us Our Daily Intake Our Weekly Intake Our Diet Of Worship On The Lord's Day Was Supplemented By The Occasional Reading Of Good Books Perhaps Or Listening To Sermons Online Or On CDs Were Supplementary To The Diet That We Would Enjoy Normally It Was True Of Most Of Us Except Those Who Were By Reason Of Their Own Providence Who Were Denied Access To The Public Means Of Grace But Now Because Of The Way Things Are What Was

[31 : 49] A Supplement Now Becomes The Daily Diet And The Weekly Diet Now You Can't Get Away From This Fact That What Is A Supplement Is Not Your Main Meal It Is Not The Main Source Of Of Dietary Requirement If You Think Of It Like That And The Same Is Truth Spiritually And As Long As God Maintains Us Spiritually The Supplement Will Work Now The Thing Is That There Is More To It Than Simply Outward Conformity There Are Those Elements That Any Person Can Partake Of You Don't Have To Be A Believer To Be To Be Present In The Public Means Of Grace You Don't Have To Be A Believer To Read Your Bible You Don't Have To Be A Believer In

Fact If You Look At Many Other Religions They Are False Religions Without Question They Do Not Believe In God The God Who Is The God Jehovah Who Is Father Son And Holy Spirit They Don't Believe In That God They Don't Believe In The Saviour Of Sinners Jesus Christ They Don't Believe That There Is A Heaven And A Hell Not The Way The Bible Describes It Anyway But They Would Put Us To Shame For Diligence And Seal Some Give All Impressions Of Being Pious In The Way That They Carry Out Their Religious Duties Now There Is More To It Than That Because Clearly Things Are Not The Way They Ought To Be Between Them And God And The Same Is True About The Christian That It's Not Simply A Matter Of Outward Conformity Nor Is It Simply A Matter Of Of Being

Those Who Observe Outwardly The Things That God Requires Of Us Many Of The Puritans Warn The Person Who Is Under God's Word And Whose Conscience Is Awakened Who Seek To Find Peace By Adopting A Form Of Godliness Becoming Religious Believers Without Putting Their Trust In Christ Because They Are Looking To Their Religiosity To Be Their Salvation And Their Salvation Can Only Be In Christ This Is The Thing There Is Belief That In This Forum Of Formalism Which Is Entirely External That There Is A Danger

In Putting Your Trust In That Paul Warns About This And Who Was As Pious As Paul In His Life As A Believer A Jewish Believer If Any Other Man Thinketh That He Hath Whereof He Might Trust In The Flesh I More He Says Circumcised The Eighth Day Of The Stock Of Israel The Tribe Of Benjamin A Hebrew Of The Hebrews As Touching The Law Of Pharisee Concerning Sealed Persecuting The Church Touching The Righteousness That Is In The Law Blameless Policyming That Everything That Could Possibly Be Done As Far As Religion Was Concerned I Did It And More Than Was Asked But In His Experience He Discovered That That Was Not Where Salvation Lay In

In His Epistle To The Romans He Says But He Is A Jew Which Is One Inwardly And Circumcision Is That Of The Heart In The Spirit And Not In The Letter Whose Praise Is Not Of Men But Of God It Is So Easy To Get Embroiled In A Religion Of Form A Religion Of Entirely Of The Externals When We Have Not Properly Engaged With Christ As Our Only Saviour Some Of You Will Be Familiar With John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress In The Telling Of That Story He Describes Two Men Who Met Christian On The Way To The Celestial City One Was Hypocrisy And The Other Was Formalism

[36 : 52] And We Are Told That They Were Born In The Land Of Vain Glory And That They Are Both On The Way To Mount Zion For Their Glory This Is The Thing They Are Intent Upon The Same The Same Destination To Their Way Of Thinking As Christian But It Is Not For God's Glory But Their Own And Christian Knows That They Needed To Come Into The Way By By The Right Way By The Narrow Way By The Narrow Gate That Leads To Life But They Didn't Do That And They Join With Christian Until They Get To The Hill Difficulty And Then At The Bottom Of That Hill Difficulty When Christian Starts To Climb They Decide To Go Around It

And One One Goes One Way And The Other Goes The Other And One Ends Up Meeting Destruction And Never Rising Again I Can't Remember What Happened To The Other Clearly Religion Of This Nature Is Not Acceptable To God Look At The Way The Prophet Describes God's Response To It Verse 15 When You Spread Forth Your Hands I Will Hide Mine Eyes From You Yea When You Make Many Prayers I Will Not Hear Your Hands Are Full Of Blood The Prophet Amos Says Of God In Chapter 5 I Hate I Despise Your Feast Days And I Will Not Smell In Your Solemn Assemblies Though

You Offer Me Burnt Offerings And Your Meat Offerings I Will Not Accept Them Neither Will I Regard The Peace Offerings Of Your Fat Beasts Now What This Requires Of Us Is To Examine Our Approach To God In Worship And In Service To Him Lest It Be Anything Other Than Wholehearted Lest There Be Anything In It That Is For Our Own Advancement Rather Than For The Glory Of God Christ Said Of Others That They Drew Nigh With Their Mouth And Honour With Their Lips But Their Heart Their Heart Is Far From Him Our Religion Has To Be More Than A Religion Of Words We Have To Be Hearers Of The Word And Do Also The Apostle James Who

Was A Careful Hearer Of The Words Of Christ Said The Same Pure Religion And Undeified Before God And The Father Is To Visit The Fatherless And Widows In Their Affliction And To Keep Himself Unspotted From The World We Have An Echo Perhaps James Words Are An Echo Of What Christ Is What The Prophet Isaiah Is Saying Learn To Do Well Seek Judgment Relieve The Oppressed Judge The Fatherless Plead For The Widow Is What Isaiah Says Perhaps We Are Too Ready To Embrace A Safe Christianity And Withdraw Into Doing What Is Customary And Right In Itself But If We Are Simply Doing What Others Have Done Before Us Without Understanding Why It Was Done And What Is To Be What Was Done Not

Saying That What Was Done Was Wrong But What Was Done By Others Before Us Was Done For The Right Reasons It's not a matter for us to do it for that reason, the reason that others have done it before us, but that we are doing what they did because it was the right thing to do.

[41 : 14] And we need to examine what God is asking of us for ourselves and do what God is asking because this is the way we glorify him and enjoy him.

It goes for all that we do, whether we are in our public worship, in our private worship, in our witness, in our devotions, in our prayers, whatever it is.

Are we doing it in spirit and in truth as God would have us do? Well, may God encourage us to look at these words and to remind ourselves that there is always a danger for God's people to fall into this kind of reasoning that is not embracing the reality of what spiritual worship is.

God encourages us to be diligent in pursuing the path of religion as it is the religion that God commands and commends.

As we saw there, for thy good, which I command thee this day, for thy good, God commands our worship because it is good for our souls.

[42 : 40] It is what glorifies him, but we gain from it. Even in our worship today, may we learn the blessing of that God as our portion.

May he bless to us these few thoughts. Let us pray. Ever blessed God, be merciful to us as we try and engage with your word at a practical level, as your people.

Encourage us to come and to worship as we are called to do. Have mercy upon us, each one. Cleanse from sin and pardon us in Jesus' name.

Now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen. Amen. Amen.