

Malachi 1:6–14

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[0:00] In 1995, at least according to historians that study such things that took place so long ago, Cheryl Osborne recorded a song titled, One of Us.

The opening line goes like this, If God had a name, what would it be, and would you call it to his face if you were faced with him in all his glory?

God's name. Names are significant. Names put a title to our identity.

Names put a title to our identity. They lay down an underscore to our uniqueness. They detail our distinctiveness.

That's why we're so careful to honor and respect the names of one another. If God had a name, what would it be?

[1:15] I've thought this week of imagining God entering our neighborhood as a first-year student and arriving at the dorm floor first meeting where we go around and answer the question, What's your name?

What pronoun would you like to be called by? I've imagined God moving in as a neighbor and one of us seeing him through the alley and the gangway and over the fence saying, Welcome.

What's your name? What do I call you when I see you coming and going? I've imagined God as a new employee at your place of work who has to meet with the human resources division and they ask God, What is your name?

I will need it for your business card. And in our text today, God says, I have a few preferred pronouns to go by.

Take a look. Father. Verse 6. Master. Verse 6.

[2:57] Check this one out. Lord of hosts. To put a translation on it. I'm the commander of the heavenly armies.

It moves on to Yahweh. That is the name that we do not speak name. And look toward the end, even in verse 14.

The last verse read today. Great King. Melak. Gadol. Great. Gadol. Can you imagine it now?

First year student. Going around. And who are you? You can call me father.

I'm okay if you want to go by master. Seven times over in the text though, the preferred pronoun is commander of the heavenly armies.

[4:08] You want Yahweh? I'll take it. Great King? I go by it. And suddenly, the resident head is wondering what to put upon the door.

Or the human resources department is asking, that's going to be a little larger than our normal business card. Your name is starting to sound like the title of an AME church on the south side of Chicago.

Where do you go? I go to, I am the father, master, commander of the armies, Yahweh, great king, church. And there's no laughing matter for him.

We respect one another's names and God is no different. Look at how he closes out the two halves of dialogue.

He lays down on the backside of each one a word about his name. The first one concludes the dialogue there in verse 11.

[5:23] For from the rising of the sun to the setting, my name will be great among the nations. And in every place, incense will be offered to my name and a pure offering.

And my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. And then on the backside of the second movement of dialogue at the end of verse 14, he says again, for I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

He is indicating to the reader that he has a name. And he has global intentions for his own fame.

In other words, his name purposes to be known to the furthest reaches of the world. God would make himself known by his name. That's his burden.

[6 : 38] Remember back to last week, we introduced this series leading up to Advent as the last word from God before Christmas. And the burden, the word being carried by the messenger to the people last week is here's what he wants you to know before Christmas.

I have loved you. And this week, that burden that he carries into our midst is my name is to be honored among you.

That's the banner over the text which gives way to the dilemma that fills out the topography and the terrain.

Why is this his concern? It's his concern because his name had been drug through the mud. And horror of all whores, it was his own priests who were to blame.

It was drug through the mud in three ways. We'll see two of them this week and one next week because this text really doesn't conclude until verse 9 of chapter 2.

[8 : 06] But for the sake of time, I wanted to divide it in half. The burden of God for the glory of his name arises from three failures within the priesthood.

You can see the priests are the one addressed there in verse 6. And the priests are the ones who are continued to be addressed in chapter 2 and verse 1.

And they were dragging his name through the mud, through their action, through their attitude, and through their instruction. What about their action?

Take a look. Verse 7 through 8a. 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?

[9 : 14] Just as an aside here, this is now the third textual hint about when Malachi might have been written, which would let us know something about the condition of the people to whom it was written.

The hint here is that there are priests who are offering sacrifices on an altar. Last week we saw that the time period of the letter related to when God had taken direct action against Moab, Edom, their enemy, which placed it in a post-exilic world.

The early clue was verse 1 where, when it was written, has no reference marker to kings because there were no kings. So now, by week 2 in the text, we've seen three hints about the people to whom it was written.

The people of God were living at a time when they were without a king in the world. The days of the kings were in their past. They had been hauled off to Babylon and yet now returned.

And they had been in the new land, the old land, now new, long enough to reinstitute temple sacrifices. And they were evidently wondering what went wrong.

[10 : 43] We are your people. We are doing the religious activity. And where are you, God? Last week, they even wondered, prove it to me that you've loved me.

This week, they will ask clearly, and how have I despised your name? With that aside laid down, though, this is the action of the priests of that day.

Their actions were an affront to God because they were bringing blind, it says there in verse 8, and lame sacrifices. the priests were the guardians of the relationship between the people of God and God himself.

The priests stood between a fallen people and a holy God. And in the book of Leviticus, chapters 20 and 21, you read about God saying something to his people.

He says, now, I'm a holy God. I'm a pure God. I'm a righteous God. I'm an all-good God. I'm a stain-free God.

[11 : 58] I'm an unpolluted God. I'm a glorious God. I'm a weighty God. I'm pure God. Therefore, when you come to me in your impure way, your sacrifice should be a reflection of me, not you.

So take a good lamb, a pure lamb, an unblemished lamb. Don't bring me your weak stuff because it reflects upon me as your father. And the priests were offending God by taking whatever it is they wanted to take before God.

How does that happen? Let me put it this way. A corrupted priesthood is responsible for the compromised church, which is responsible for the despising of God out in the world.

Let me move from the old to the new. pastorate pastorate that is contaminated is the cause of the church's corruption, which is the reason why the name of God is despised in the world.

Am I home yet? are we here? What I'm trying to tell you is that when ordained ministers of the gospel think so little of God that they live unconsecrated lives taking unto themselves and within themselves blemishes and sin and thinking that they can go on in the performance of their duty with the people is an affront to God.

[14 : 14] Unholy, unconsecrated ministers of the gospel, we are responsible for the way God is viewed in the world, says Malachi.

And what happens is then their unholiness moves to an unconcernedness.

They're no longer guarding God's glory, they're polluting it. There's a carelessness and over time they're even unaware of it.

Unholiness, unconcernedness, unawareness to the point where they're actually asking here, how have we despised your name?

Let me put this out there. This is going to be the most encouraging thing for you if you are not a Christian here this morning. Because you expect, if you dared walk into a church like this, you expect to hear the pastor tell you what's wrong with you and that you need to repent because you despise the name of the living God.

[15 : 37] But you've come here today. And so let me encourage you. You despise God's name God's name because he falls weightless not merely among the laity, but among those who are licensed to lead on behalf of his people.

Are we seeing this today in our own world? Of course we are. Let me put it to you as clearly as I can. You are not to blame in one sense for judging the church for the church is the cause of the compromise of his name.

Worldliness in the pew is a direct result of the waywardness in the pulpit. The priesthood in Malachi's day and in our own is too weak to restrain us from sin.

We have lowered the bar and in doing so we have made God look less than he ought to look like in the eyes of the world. We have required too little of ourselves and of our parishioners.

We have watered down his word. We have grown numb to the glory of his name. We find no heft in his holiness.

[17 : 27] No reason to live according to his weight. As a result the world is a mess.

Why is the world a mess? It's a mess first and foremost because ordained clergy we have lapsed on the glory of his name.

Repentance is needed and it ought to begin at home. He puts a word picture to what they did.

Look there 8b and following. 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? 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.

[18 : 48] The word picture is simply this. Try that with your mayor. Try that with your governor. Try that priests in Malachi's day to the kings of Persia whether they be Artaxerxes or Darius or any of them.

Give that a run. Schedule an appointment to meet with someone in the world who holds title rank and bring to them a blind crippled goat as an offering.

Their doormen would not let you get inside the palace. They would save your life by keeping you from his presence.

They would shut the door until you brought what was worthy. And the argument here the word picture is if that's the way it is among yourselves how is it any less among the one who is according to the Apostles Creed our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name.

That's the Lord's prayer. The Apostles Creed goes creator of heaven and earth. That's the irony of it all.

[20 : 20] Here's the irony of it all. We take greater care over the respect and honor of what someone wants to be called when they're 15 to 18 years old than we do over God from whom we have life as our Father who is master the one to whom we owe allegiance.

The one who's commander of the heavenly armies. The one who is Yahweh. The one who is truly God. Great.

King. And it's the religious teachers who are leading the way. Truly, we have debased ourselves. We have come in this day within the church, within the church, within the church, to despise the name of the Lord and to worship the creature rather than the creator.

We have not honored him as God, nor have we given thanks. And because of this, he has given the church over to its desperate stirry.

[21 : 54] The priest's actions were not alone in what displeased God. It was their attitude. Look at verses 12 and 13.

But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted and its fruit, that it is fruit, may be despised. But you say, what a weariness this is, and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. The attitude is now revealed while the action was first put forward. And notice how the language has intensified.

It's moved from merely polluting things to profaning things. blasphemous act among the ordained clergy extends beyond what they do to how they feel about it while they're doing it.

Hey, it's one thing to be a pastor and go, it's time for me to, I need a little vacation, I need a couple days away, I need to feel the sun on my face because I'm tired of my people.

[23 : 05] That's one thing. But it's quite another thing to go, I'm tired of all this because I'm just kind of tired of God. This is a weariness. That word there for snorting, in the Hebrew, there's a sound of breath or let me just put it to you this way, puah, puah, to breathe, puah, this, and now that, just intensify that.

The priesthood is like, oh my gosh. That's the way they felt about offering to God what was his just due.

It's incredible, really. We are so ensconced in the church today with a lens that clearly sees the need to give everyone their just due.

But for some reason, we have no lens to give God his just due. In fact, we have transferred giving God his just due for giving you your just due.

But I cannot give you your just due and not give God his just due. I cannot say to you, I have loved you, therefore whatever you do is acceptable to him because the text says that while he loves us, he's not merely loved, but to be feared.

[24 : 48] Did you catch that at the beginning and the end of the text? Where is my fear? Verse 6 and verse 14. Well, how did this snorting, this weariness, this lack of pathos evidence itself?

Again, it was at the table. It was at the table. It was at the offering table. They would offer food that is despised.

They had no delight in doing God's will. In other words, the problem was both external, what they did, and internal, how they felt about it.

It's the same problem in the church today. These two things are moving hand in hand. Each requires its own conversation with God. Let me put it to you as clearly as I can because you're going to go visit other churches in the next 20 years too.

And if you walk into a church and the table of the Lord, the table, the place of offering, the blood sacrifice of Christ, if that is open, by that I mean you don't even have to believe that Jesus' blood shed for you is this means of your salvation, but you can bring whatever you want to it.

[26 : 13] It can be anything you need from it. If you actually begin to walk from Holy Trinity Church, here, to an understanding of God that because He is love, will accept anything you do, then you are walking away from not only Judaism, you are certainly walking away from a Christian interpretation of its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. What do we have? You cannot participate in the Lord's table and in the table of in the New Testament demons. You can't.

We're so syncretistic. We want it all, don't we? We want it all. We want one foot in all of what Christianity may have to offer, and we want the other foot in whatever it is I want to bring.

And the book of Malachi says you can't have it both ways. The table. The result of all of this, that is the priest's actions and the priest's attitude, is interesting here.

The word picture that followed the priest's action isn't given to you here on the priest's attitude. This is frightening for you.

[27 : 49] To this point, everything's been very frightening for me. So let me let you enter into my game this morning. Let me put some fear in you, because right now, all the weight of the message is sitting on me.

There's no word picture about their profaning the table that relates to the priest. instead, there's a warning to the people, not the priest.

Look at the first part of verse 14. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished.

In other words, there's just that little hint there in 14a that the priesthood was not the only problem. The people themselves did not really want to honor God's name either.

The shortcomings of the priesthood were mirrored by the selfishness of the people. The sins of the pastorate were a reflection of the sacrifices of the parishioner.

[28 : 59] In other words, the priests were doing only what the people in their heart of hearts really wanted. In other words, the ministers were merely scratching where you itch.

And look what God says. Here's a word here that's not a word picture of the disastrous effect upon the priesthood. It's a warning for the parishioner.

Cursed be the cheat. You can't get a stronger word in the Old Testament which lays out blessings and curses. In other words, the text has hung us all.

You strap to the mast with me. Cursed means God against. Cursed means blessings revoked.

Cursed means fellowship lost. Cursed means being abandoned by God.

[30 : 19] Let me shut this down because it's an unusual week. It's a heavy word. But you know what? Verse 1 already told us that. This oracle was going to be a burden so you're just going to have to bear with it.

The actions of the priests and the attitudes of the priests make us ask then what is acceptable worship? What's acceptable? What does God want from me today?

What does God want from you? Well, first I want to take a cue from Jesus who says when we approach God, if you want to approach God in an acceptable way, he says, here's how you do it. Start by saying, our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. It's interesting to me the way he latches on to that familial term. A father is one who gave life to the child.

The Bible is indicating that God is a spiritual father, that he can give spiritual life to him so that when you talk to God, you use the preferred pronoun of father, not because we're some patriarchal, old-fashioned, unthinking constituency, but because the word is an accurate representation of the one through whom we have life.

[31 : 53] So, he says, our Father, and then he says, which art in heaven. I mean, you remember that phrase, commander of the heavenly army. So, Jesus is wedding, this familial term, with this heavenly notion and then he says, hallowed be your name.

So, when I come to him, I'm coming to, I'm coming to Father, but I'm coming to more than that. Jesus is saying, this is acceptable worship, call God your Father, who dwells in the heavens, whose name is to be hallowed.

Secondly, look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. What is acceptable worship? Not just take your cue from Jesus, but I'm going to say, you've got to look to Jesus.

You can't look to me. You can't look to the priesthood. You can't look to the church, big C church. You can't look to the structure. You can't look to the authority.

You can't look to the human institutions. They're all hung on this text. So, you've got to look to Jesus, because Jesus, when he came, says, thy name I have honored.

[33 : 13] And then he looked at his listeners and he said, and why do you dishonor me? So, Jesus becomes the answer for the failed priesthood.

How do you prepare for Christmas? Not only to be buoyed by the notion that, thank God he loves me, but to remember Jesus through whom I have someone very unlike what I'm reading about in this text.

Jesus is the replacement priest. Jesus is the one who offers perfect sacrifice one time for all people. He doesn't have to do it time and time again and he never wearied of it.

He said, I have a body prepared for me and I come, I delight to do thy will. In other words, he eagerly plummeted at Advent across the threshold of heaven and down through all the galaxies to take up residence in the womb of a virgin that he might give life and breath and fullness to all the honor that belongs to God and so that when he's on the cross he's fulfilling all the things that relate

to the glory of God's name.

So you've got to look to him. He has undone what the priests and people here have done. He has cleared you from curse. He has brought access to God.

[34 : 46] He is what is acceptable. You want to bring acceptable worship? Begin praying the way Jesus taught you but begin submitting your life to Jesus who alone saved you.

And he's coming. Come Advent we celebrate his arrival. Third, listen. to the truths concerning Jesus.

Hebrews 11 let us be grateful then for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire.

What does he want from you today? He wants you to draw near to the sacrifice that is pure.

What does he want from you today? He wants you to stimulate one another on to good things not bad things. What does he want for you today?

[35 : 51] He wants you to continue coming together for encouragement. What does he want for you today? He wants you to stop sinning because it's ridiculous given all that Jesus has done.

Live a life that would be more closely approximate with his word and a different kind of joy begins to emerge.

What's needed as we approach Christmas? According to Malachi, we need a bigger vision of God. We need a concern for his name.

Our Heavenly Father, we're going to have lunch together. We're going to be at table. And after this weighty word, but true word, we pray that you would encourage our hearts to respond the way you would want us to respond, each and every one.

Lord, may the church, may the pastorate, may both priests and people prepare for Christmas by repenting that we would be made ready for his arrival.

[37 : 19] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.