

God is Worthy

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Date: 21 June 2026

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[0 : 00] This morning, we are completing what seems to have been an epic journey.

! We are wrapping up our study of the Minor Prophets. So if you have your Bible, I want you to find the book of Malachi.

I know, it's Malachi. If you don't know where Malachi is, well, find the book of Matthew and turn left. It's a very short...

Uh-oh, I know I've got sermon notes in here. That's last week's. There they are. It's very short. It takes about six minutes to read it from cover to cover.

Four chapters, and the fourth chapter is really kind of small. But as I was reading it this week, I wondered how comfortable Malachi, not comfortable but familiar, Malachi would have felt living in today's environment.

[1 : 22] Let me start off by saying this, that God is worthy. Oh, I almost heard that there. I'm going to say God is worthy? Amen.

Okay. But what do I mean God is worthy? God is worthy of our praise. God is worthy of our treasure. God is worthy of our very lives.

And that's what we mean when we say God is worthy. So let's talk about Malachi or Malachi. And his name means a messenger or the messenger of God.

And he ministered about 100 years after King Cyrus made the decree. Remember, they were in captivity for 70 years. And Cyrus, he wrote the proclamation, All the Jews can go home and here's a bunch of money, go build your temple and worship your God.

This is about 100 years after that declaration. All the people had gone back with an expectation that, hey, we're going home. We're going to return to the way it was.

[2 : 34] Everything's going to be good. We're going to be healthy, happy, wealthy, fat, and prosperous. But instead of that expected blessing from the Lord, they had poverty.

They had consistent droughts. Crops were failing. And that means that people were starving. They had pestilence, not only among their crops, among their animals, but even within themselves. It was nothing like what they expected. Oh, and if you read Malachi, he's going to give us four reasons why this happened.

Take a look in chapter 1, verses 7 through 9. 1. 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 and sacrifice, is that not evil?

[3 : 51] And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor. Will he accept you and show you favor? Remember? You see, they had failed to honor God.

They had given him, eh, I really don't need this. You go to Goodwill, you know, people give things away that they don't want.

Some of it's okay. Some of it's really good. Some of it's, you know, that's kind of what they were doing with their offering with the Lord. They were just saying, well, this is what I can spare. This isn't going to bother me.

That's not honoring the Lord. Take a look at chapter 2, verses 10 through 12. Have we not all one father?

Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah has been faithless, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem.

[4 : 58] For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign God. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendants of the man

who does this and brings an offering to the Lord of hosts.

You see, they'd failed to live rightly. God had laid it all out in the Mosaic law. This is what you're supposed to do. And they were doing anything but that. When it says that they, what does it say? They faithless covenant, married the daughter of a foreign God, the idea there was that they were worshiping wrongly.

They weren't worshiping the Lord God alone. They were taking advantage of the widows, the orphans, the sojourners. They were charging interest on loans to where they shouldn't be. They were working on the Sabbath when they were supposed to be resting. They were just failing to do what was expected of them. And then I want you to take a look at chapter 2, verses 13 through 16.

[6 : 15] This is the second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because He no longer regards your offerings or accepts it with favor from your hands.

They were unhappy because, you know, look, God, I gave you this and they're not getting what they expect, right? You say, why does He not?

Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did He not make them one with a portion of the Spirit in their union?

And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garments with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless.

[7 : 18] They failed to honor marriage. So you've got this, they failed to honor God, they failed to live rightly, they failed to honor marriage.

And there's one more accusation which lands here. Chapter 1, verse 6. 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, men and women of the congregation, because the pastor's got it nailed down.

No. He's accusing the priests, isn't he? Take a look in chapter 2, verse 1. And now, O priests, this command is for you.

If you will not listen, if you will not take to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.

[8 : 34] You see, there was a failure of the priests to honor God as well. you read that, you know, and the people came back from captivity, and they expected blessing.

They expected to go back and everybody have their property, everybody to have their own fig tree, you know, land flowing of milk and honey. And here they are, broke, destitute, barely getting by, and God goes, well, let me explain it to you.

Boom, boom, boom, boom. why? You see, I'm not going to say you're failing to honor the Lord. I'm not going to say you're failing to live rightly. I'm not going to say you're blowing up marriages. I'm not going to say that the pastors of this nation are going the wrong way. I'm not going to say that.

You know that. You know right and wrong. When you do that which is wrong, you feel that. You know. We all partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. You know it's wrong to steal.

[9 : 56] You know it's wrong to lie. You know it's wrong to cut me off in front of the chow line. That's bad for your health, right? We know right and wrong. It's not so much the individual acts that are the problem.

Let me see if I can point out to you what the real problem is. You see, the real problem is wrong thinking. This is what was going on in their head.

Chapter 2, verse 17. You have wearied the Lord with your words. You say, how have we wearied Him? By saying, everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them.

God doesn't delight in people who do what's wrong. They're not in a special position of, oh boy, look at that person.

No. God does not delight in people who do evil. But that's what they were saying. And quite honestly, a lot of people say that here today.

[11 : 09] The Apostle Paul fought with that concept as well. There were people who believed that God's grace covers all my sin and the more sin that I have, the more grace I get.

And Paul's response to that was, God forbid you think like that. That's completely the wrong way to look at it. Not only that, take a look over here in, let's finish reading this.

Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them. Or by asking, where is the God of justice? They accused God of abdicating His role as judge.

You see, in the nation of Israel under the Mosaic law, there was an awful lot of God's involvement in the daily activities. You guys remember, David was bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem and they were carrying it wrong.

Instead of it being carried by the priests, they had it on a wagon. You guys remember that story?

The wagon hit a pothole. Daggone governmental employees filling the pot, right?

[12:21] And the thing began to fall and Uriah reached out to stabilize it and God said, uh-uh-uh.

Boom, he died because what he did was wrong. You remember when Moses was in a battle of who would be accepted as a leader of the nation of Israel as they're getting started and Korah, who was a priest, said, hey, I'm just as special as you are, Moses.

And God caused the ground to open up and eat him and his whole family? Yeah. God had an awful lot of direct interaction in their lives and now they were seeing people who were doing wrong and not getting, you know, hit by bolts of lightning out of the blue.

And they thought, oh, well, God's off the job. No. What do we read? We read, this is the day of repentance.

This is the day to turn your heart back to the Lord, that he is patient and kind and slow in his wrath.

But it says that it is appointed unto man once to die and then to face the judgment of the Lord.

He hasn't abandoned his role. He's giving us a chance to repent. Take a look at chapter 3, verses 14 and 15.

[13:44] You have said it is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts?

And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper, but they put God to the test and they escape. You see, they were saying that it was vain to serve the Lord.

Why should I go out of my way? Why should I honor God? I don't see anything around me that is better because I'm a Christian.

back in that day they wouldn't call themselves Christians, would they? I don't see anything better for following God. There's no benefit in it for me. In fact, it's hard work serving the Lord.

I mean, it takes, he asked me to give money. He asked me to give time. He asked me not to do the things that I want to do because he says they're bad for me and I see people getting away with it all the time.

[14:48] It's vain to serve the Lord. You see, there was wrong thinking going on in the nation.

Anybody see that happening today?

Of course not. I've got my head in a bag. Yeah. Why?

Why did they have those wrong thoughts? Why do we see people thinking wrong? I have an answer.

Not only do I have an answer, I've got some solutions. But let me answer you why people are thinking wrong. You see, attitudes and actions spring from belief.

What you believe, not what you say you believe, not what you want to believe, not what you put right down on the card so that everybody thinks better of you. What you actually believe will drive your attitude and your actions.

[16:10] actions. When I was a child, I heard about this guy who had a tightrope across the Niagara Falls and he had a wheelbarrow and he was doing this thing and he'd go over to the crowd and they were all excited and he said, do you guys think I can do it again?

They're like, yeah, no, do you really think so? Yeah, you want to get in the wheelbarrow? No! Right? What you believe will drive your attitudes and actions.

And when your belief erodes, your attitude and your actions follow. You see, we're not, I'm not here to address attitudes and actions.

I'm here to address beliefs. What is it that you actually believe? And so here's the solution.

Did I spell that correctly, Diane? Okay, good. I looked at that and I went, okay. Remember, God is worthy.

[17:19] Okay, we're going to start with this foundation. God is worthy. He's worthy of adoration and fear. Why adoration? He made us.

We are his unique creation. We are the only thing in all of creation that is made in his own image. That's us. And not only that, but after having taken that blessing of being created in his image and turning into sin, God loved us enough to send his son to die on a cross for us.

He cares about us. He gave us his word so that we know who he is and what his expectations are and why things don't work the way we think they should. It's called sin.

And sin is here because we chose it. And God in his great love and compassion and mercy sent Jesus Christ to pay the penalty. What a joy it is to know that all of our sin and guilt was paid for on the cross.

And that salvation is open to anyone who will turn to him and believe. Yeah, he's worthy of adoration. And he's also worthy of fear.

[18 : 33] Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Let me help you out. I told you last week that I was driving down the road and Christmas went off and I didn't feel any fear because I was doing what was right.

There's still that as soon as you see those lights pop first thing you do is check your speedometer right. That's because that's a little bit of fear. Because they have authority.

They have power. They can write tickets. God has authority and power. He makes judgment.

If you're not afraid of that then you're a fool. God is worthy. God is so what do we do about this?

Well let me say this. It's more than just reading your Bible. It's more than just showing up. We need to be engaged with one another.

[19 : 47] We need to encourage one another. We need to pick one another up. Don't get me wrong. I'm not minimizing spending time in God's word. You absolutely must.

I mean it goes without saying spend time in God's word. How can you know what God wants? How can you know what his expectations are? How can you know what the standards are? If you don't know the word of God, you have to know the word of God.

That's why every Sunday we open the word, we read it, we spend time in it, we break it down. It's vital. And you need to be here. You need to gather together.

I know Mrs. James and I are not going to be here. We've already got plans for the first two Sundays where we're going to be worshiping. When we took off a couple weeks ago to go see Bryce's graduation, we went to church.

church, we believe and we know that being in church and associating with other believers is vital to our life as a believer.

[20 : 52] Fundamental. What does it say? Do not forsake the gathering together. But more than that, I want to encourage you to encourage one another.

I want to encourage you to be encouraging. I want you to be active in your relationship with other Christians. You can't just come in, get, you know, oh, I got my Bible for the week and then go off. No, you have to be engaged. You have to be working together. You have to be encouraging one another. You have to be encouraging and be encouraged. You see, when we fail to spend time in God's Word, we lose proper perspective.

When we fail to fellowship, we miss personal accountability. And when we fail to engage and encourage and be encouraged, we lose the benefit of ministry, the joy of being useful, the understanding of how good it is.

How many of you have been on Highway 2 up by Marsons? Or I think it was Highway 2 in the Chumstick last time I saw him. He has a sign and he says, I'm worth helping.

[22 : 28] Man, I want to run that guy over. You know, let's see if he's smart enough to get out the sidewalk. Let's see if he's willing to do anything for himself. When people are unwilling to work, when people fail to be productive, they're failing in the first and basic purpose of creation.

You know, God created you to be a productive member of society. Created man, where did he put him? He didn't put him in a retirement center. He put him in a garden so that he could do what? Work it. Do you realize that this is not a place for us just to come and relax? This is a place for us to come and be at work, helping and encouraging, meeting needs.

Do you know what happens to somebody if all you do is give them things? It's not good, is it? We see parents that treat children that way.

We call them spoiled brats. We see people that never really achieve anything because it's all given to them. Take a look at the difference when somebody has to earn something, when somebody puts in the effort.

[23 : 50] They value it, they care for it. it. They They God is worthy. Let's be active in it.

I got one more thing to say and then I'm going to paint you a picture. Well, I'm not going to paint you a picture, I'm going to show you a picture. Dad ever come home and say, don't test me?

You ever get that feeling where you've just had enough don't push me? How often has God said that? Don't test the Lord your God? How often does he say it? He says all the time. You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, right?

Except for this one thing. There is one thing where God says, I dare you.

Try it. look with me in chapter 3, verse 10. Chapter 3, verse 10.

[25 : 07] Bring the full tithe into the storehouse. Now, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. They lived under the Mosaic law. They were supposed to give 10%. Do we live under the Mosaic law? No, we don't.

are we supposed to give 10%? No. In fact, you can give as much as you like. You can give 5%. You can give 7 and 3 quarters. You can give 25%. You can give however much. God loves a cheerful giver, right?

All right, back to Malachi. Verse 10. Bring the full tithe into my storehouse that there may be food in my house and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts.

If I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. Test the Lord.

[26 : 16] Okay. Okay. You remember Malachi is God's messenger and he's presenting this message. It's been about 100 years since they returned.

They've got the temple built and they had all these expectations of living back in the land with all the promise and blessing and everything is going great. And it's not. They've got nothing but disease, sickness, oppression, debt.

and God says, try me in this. Be faithful in your giving.

Do you realize that where your treasure is, there your heart is? Where you put your money is where your heart is. I'll be honest with you.

I'm not asking for you guys to bring a billion dollars into the church. I wouldn't mind it. It'd make it a lot easier to make budget. But do you remember the one person that Christ praised?

[27 : 26] The widow with two mites, which was basically what you can pick up walking across the parking lot. But she was faithful. She was giving.

It's amazing. I don't care what level you start at. I don't care if you start. I will give a dollar a week. You want to know what's going to happen? That dollar is going to become so precious to you. You're going to feel like, oh, I need to keep this dollar. You know, I've got a plan. You're going to be tested on that dollar. But if you're faithful, that means if you take care to be budgeted, if you take care to have it, if you take care to give it, if you are honoring the Lord and putting him to the test, you can see how many meals I've missed.

And I've been working to get this down because God has been faithful. I'm not saying that I am wealthy above all others. What I'm saying is that God has been faithful to us. Hasn't always been easy, but he's always been faithful.

There's been times where we've been poorer than church mice. there's been times where we needed help because we didn't have the money. But do you know our relationship with the Lord has always been good?

[28 : 44] We might not have had the world's wealth, but we've had good. I encourage you, put the Lord to the test.

Now, let me show you a picture. You want to see a picture? It's a great picture. Kill the lights for me. Keep going, keep going, keep going.

You ready? This is an incredible picture. You're just going to be amazed. Ready? Isn't that awesome? Do you know what that is?

That's a bunch of geese flying. They know where they're going. do you know what they do when they fly?

They honk. Don't smirk. Do you know what that honking does? Number one, it tells them where they are.

[29 : 52] You know? It tells, it makes, everybody's like, okay, we're, you know. Do you know what else it does? Who do you think hears the most honking?

Do you think this guy hears the most? Yeah? How about this person? Do you hear the most? Who hears the most honking?

This person. Do you know that that is the hardest position to be in? I'm, I'm stunned.

The lead bird, everybody else, it doesn't, it's pretty equal from here down to here, and from here over to here.

70%, it is 70% more effort to lead than it is to be down here.

[31 : 04] That lead bird, breaking the wind, setting the pace, setting the direction, gives everybody else a 70% benefit. Significant?

Do you think it's worth a honk now and then? Keep going buddy, we're behind you. That's exactly what it is. It's encouragement. You know, and if you look down here, you see this guy, maybe they're getting ready to break off.

Have you ever watched them fly? You get these little ones, nope, nope, coming back in. Nope, nope, coming back in. And if you watch them, this bird will rotate.

Usually, this group right in here, they'll rotate when they get tired. That's what we're getting ready to do. I'm getting ready to rotate a little bit.

Okay? But here's the thing. Participate. Be in God's Word.

[32 : 10] Be in the church. Put the Lord to the test. And see the benefit that comes. see the benefit that comes.

As together we serve the Lord. Let's pray. Let's Let's Let's Thank you.