

Giving God What's Right, Not Left

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[0 : 0 0] it would be great if you could turn in your bibles to malachi page 958 as we continue our series through this book this minor prophet as you do how about i pray for us let's pray heavenly father we do thank you for your word to us and again although it is written to people thousands of years ago what you have to say is still very much relevant for us today and so father we pray that you would help us to understand your word and more than that though to live in light of it for we ask it in jesus name amen well uh last week was uh my birthday and uh michelle asked uh you know in front of me she asked the kids what they should get for my birthday and uh one of my children said a walking stick he's an old man it gets it gets worse uh the youngest then said plastic surgery i don't think she knows what plastic surgery is but then this verse from malachi came to mind if i'm a father where is the honor due to me of course uh my kids do honor and respect me um you know they obey uh they say good night when they go to bed they often say i love you dad and so on they do show respect in other ways and it's uh different for different cultures as well a friend of mine who comes from a chinese culture showing honor in his family means he serves everyone else their food at dinner time because he's the youngest and so he shows honor for the older ones by serving them food regardless of what culture or type of family we come from we're all familiar are we not with the idea of showing respect of showing honor of course the type and amount of honor you show depends on who the person is and does it not so yesterday i went to the wedding of jimmy and claire uh jimmy is one of our student ministers who serves at 6 p.m church uh he's also a rugby union fan and a new zealander yeah and he's now married an australian and so claire the australian added uh some of her own vows to the traditional ones yesterday she promised to also mourn with jimmy when the all blacks lose and rejoice with him when they win but she also promised to love and honor him and put god and him above all others why because jimmy is now her husband she wouldn't show the same type and level of honor to every other person so it depends on who the person is as to how much honor you show them and here in malachi the person who's supposed to be honored do you notice is god last week we saw how god had truly loved israel by choosing to adopt them as his firstborn sons as it were those who inherit the blessings but this relationship of father son says god it comes with respect it ought to come with reverence fear honor yet all god receives is dishonor and contempt by the priests in particular so point one verse six a son honors his father and a slave his master if i am the father where is the honor due me and if i'm 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 notice here it is the priests in particular who are dishonoring god the very ones whose business and lives were about honoring

god the irony and notice also that they are dishonoring god's name it says there in verse six in fact the word name comes up eight times in our passage today of course to dishonor god's name is to dishonor god himself for god's name is closely linked with who he is his identity i mean we're familiar with this idea are we not i mean have you heard of the phrase to drag their name through the mud to drag someone's name through the mud is to drag the person themselves because of this connection between name and character that's why we really need i think to resist the world's trend to take god's name in vain have you noticed that it's just the phrase oh my god it's just becoming more and more commonplace these days in fact they've even got an acronym for it now when they text they just say omg for sure that's how commonplace it is but we must resist using god's name as a curse word or a flippant statement of surprise because to do so is to reduce his very character his very personhood to a curse or something flippant and meaningless but the point here is the priests are doing this they are dragging god's name through the mud and in so doing dragging his very personhood his character through the mud dishonoring god's name and so just demeaning god himself how or verse 7 god says you're doing it by offering defiled food on my altar but you ask how have we defiled you by saying that the lord's table is contemptible for when you offer blind animals for sacrifice is that not wrong and 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 now plead with god to be gracious to us but with such offerings from your hands will he accept you says the lord almighty and if you're not quite got the gist then he repeats it in verse 12 he says you profane my name by saying the lord's table is defiled and it's food contemptible and you say what a burden and you sniff at it contemptuously says the lord almighty when you bring injured lame or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices should i accept them from your hands says the lord you see what they're doing they are dishonoring god by offering dodgy animals for sacrifice and it's not as though they didn't know they should be offering you know good animals i mean on the next slide is a verse from leuiticus in the old testament they would have had this they had to offer an animal without blemish that was the instruction without defect one that is healthy in as perfect as it could be well maybe they missed that instruction then well unlikely because on the next slide it's everywhere and that's just the first four chapters leuiticus it comes up 55 times in the old testament they could not have missed it the sacrifice was to be without blemish it was to be as perfect as it could be why because it was being offered to god but instead of giving their best what was right the priests gave what was left left over the blind the lame effectively roadkill in verse 13 where it says um an injured animal by the word for injured there is literally taken by violence that is it's an animal that has been maimed or killed by another animal and so the equivalent of roadkill nowadays and so what the priests were doing was happily scraping off the ground and offering up to god

on behalf of the people no no they were dishonoring god by what they were giving and it seems they just didn't want to give their best what was right it was it was easier to give what was left after all in verse 13 it says that they talk about their service to god as a burden and they sniff at the table contemptuously yeah why do we have to do this yeah oh we'll just we'll just yeah that lame animal that'll do i mean giving your best costs money doesn't it i mean that's partly why it's called a sacrifice because it costs it's sacrificial but god deserved it and so to show how inappropriate their actions were god says back in verse 8 he says try and offer this roadkill to your governor and see what happens would he be pleased with you would he accept you of course not and so verse 9 if the governor won't accept you well god says i won't accept such offerings when you seek my grace my forgiveness in fact so offensive were these sacrifices that would have been better not to offer them at all see verse 10 he says oh that one of you would shut the temple doors so that you would not light useless fires on my altar i'm not pleased with you says the lord almighty and i will accept no offering from your hands for my name will be great among the nations from where the sun rises to where it sets in every place incense and notice pure offerings will be brought to me because my name will be great among the nations says the lord almighty see what god says here in verse 10 he says look it's better off if you just close the temple shut up shop than to offer those sacrifices and show such contempt for me in fact even if they don't shut the temple god is not going to accept their sacrifices anymore he says and to shame them he says in verse 11 that what they bring is is nothing compared to what even the nations will bring one day for the nations one day will bring incense and pure offerings not leftovers this is how the people in every nation in every place will treat god on the last day and yet the priests whose very business it was to serve and honor god are the very ones who are dishonoring god and showing disdain for his name what's worse is that they were actually teaching others to do the same and so in verse 14 which is where we're up to now uh there's a warning for all people it seems verse 14 says cursed is the cheat whoever it is who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the lord for i am a great king says the lord almighty and my name is to be feared among the nations and notice here by the way that god is not asking for what they do not have he says if someone has an acceptable male among the flock god is not unreasonable but the point is they do and then they decide not to give what is right and instead give what is left over and if they do such a thing then god says they are cursed for showing such contempt towards god why well verse 14 gives the reason he says for or because i am a great king and my name is to be feared among the nations yet how's it going to be feared among the nations if his own people don't even fear it and giving what is right but instead give what is left growing up michelle had a pet dog called sam who always got the leftovers after dinner in fact i may

mention sam the dog to you before um because in the pecking order um i was below sam the dog in fact uh you know he was offered food before i was offered second sometimes um it's changed i'm glad to say i'm not sure because i've risen the pecking order or because sam's passed away we're not going to go there but every bit of leftover that was not put in the fridge was put into sam's bowl all the scraps off everyone's plates were put there and at that stage our children were young toddlers who you know chewed you know left half chewed food with slobber all over it and that kind of went in the bowl as well now imagine now just imagine the queen arrives on the doorstep for dinner and michelle's parents take sam's bowl the dog's bowl and then plonk in front of the queen there you go that's for you it's unimaginable isn't it i mean it's it's so offensive it's almost disrespectful to even joke about and yet this is effectively what the priests were doing to god offering such leftovers to god the great king it was highly offensive and they knew better they did know better so no wonder god judges them for it at point two chapter two and now you priests this warning is for you if you do not listen and if you do not resolve to honor my name says the lord almighty i will send a curse on you and i will curse your blessings yes i have already cursed them because you have not resolved to honor me says god notice here part of the judgment is to turn their blessings into curses you see all priests came from the tribe of levi and they're all supposed to do two things in particular first they were to teach the people the truth about god and his ways and second they would offer sacrifices for the people and their sins after which they could pronounce the blessing of forgiveness but now god has turned these blessings into curses for he's already said in chapter 1 verse 10 that he will no longer accept these sacrifices for sin and so there is no pronouncement of the blessing of forgiveness instead there's only curse remaining that's pretty serious isn't it i mean to have no forgiveness is the worst curse you could receive because without forgiveness we face judgment for our own sin and the bible calls that judgment hell it's very serious and so because these priests have dishonored god's name and brought such a curse then god will dishonor their name and curse or rebuke their descendants do you see verse 3 because of you i will rebuke your descendants and i will smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices and you will be carried off with it one writer called this verse uncomplimentary i think that's a bit of an understatement it's disgusting and dishonoring to the priests isn't it dung on their faces but that's because what they were doing was so disgusting and dishonoring to god and i think we sometimes forget just who god is and how doing such a thing is so truly offensive but what god is saying here is that he will make them like their actions their actions were disgusting so he will make them disgusting and just as the dung and the offal the disgusting parts of the animal sacrifice used to be collected and carried outside the temple outside the city away from god's presence well so too these priests will become like the dung and

offal the bits of the animals that are carried away from the temple away from god's presence verse 3 says they will be carried off with it and what's more god says in verse 3 literally that i will rebuke your seed which means uh it could mean their descendants or like your footnote says their grain or perhaps both god will reduce their harvest and their numbers but when god does all this it's actually meant to lead them to repentance lead them to recommit themselves to god so that the covenant that god had with levi and all the priests from levi's family might continue have a look at verse 4 says and you will know that i have sent you this warning so that my covenant with levi may continue says the lord almighty and then he explains his covenant and what a priest is meant to be like in verse 5 he says my covenant was with him a covenant of life and peace and i gave them to him and this called for reverence and he did he revered me and stood in awe of my name true instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips he walked with me in peace and uprightness and turned many from sin for the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge because he is the messenger of the lord almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth but you priests have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble you have violated the covenant with levi says the lord almighty and so i've caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law you see here god explains what the priests were meant to do and they were meant to revere his name walk in uprightness they were meant to teach people the truth about god and turn people from sin rather than cause them to stumble but sadly the priests did not do what they were supposed to do so god will judge them as they despise god's name so now their name will be despised among the people it seems the priest will become a bit of a joke among the people and the people will no longer listen to them or perhaps no longer give them their tithes and offerings for they have broken the priestly covenant and in so doing caused many people to stumble and to dishonor god as well now historically speaking there were some sides of recommitment after malachi came ezra and nehemiah not in our bibles but historically and there was a bit of a recommitment but it did not last so the people still needed a better priest a priest who would walk with god in complete uprightness who would really revere god's name who would really teach god's truth who would really turn many from sin who would be the ultimate messenger of god it's not hard to see who that person is is it it's the lord jesus who became the perfect priest point three for jesus fulfills each of these priestly requirements and so became the perfect priest so for example jesus did walk with complete uprightness on the next slide is a verse um and click next again i don't know how big these are going to come up today uh hit next again maybe or not i'll read them to you it says such a such a high priest meets our need one who is holy blameless and pure he walked in uprightness uh next jesus also revered god's name and remember what happened he people were selling animals in the temple and he drove them out exclaiming do not make my father's house a marketplace he revered god's name as the priests

[20 : 16] were supposed to do and jesus also told the truth he taught the truth even when the pharisees didn't want to hear it and so on the next uh click he said whatever i say is what the father has told me to say indeed jesus is the word of god become flesh you can't get a better messenger than that and as a priest jesus did offer up what was right an unblemished sacrifice for sin and so next again hebrews 9 says how much more than will the blood of christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to god cleanse our consciences from the acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living god and so jesus did turn many people from sin not just by speaking the truth but ultimately by cleansing our consciences so that we may serve the living god see jesus fulfills all these things the priests were supposed to be so jesus is the perfect priest that god was looking for the perfect priest we people need for he not only teaches the truth about this life he shows us as well the way to eternal life he not only announces the blessing of forgiveness but he secures the blessing of forgiveness with his own blood though these blessings are for us who believe in him who trust him with our lives and so do you do you trust in jesus the perfect priest for without him there is no blessing of forgiveness there is only the curse of judgment that we deserve do you believe in jesus for us who do then you may be thinking what does this passage have to tell us i mean it's talking about priests i'm not a priest you know andrew and andrew are ordained priests it's got nothing to do with me well let me say that if you are a christian the bible actually says you are a priest you are part of the royal priesthood i think i've got it on the next slide i think from 1 peter chapter 2 it says you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to become a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to god through jesus christ what do these sacrifices look like uh well i think i've got one on the next slide um from hebrews 13 says uh through jesus then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to god that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name and do not neglect to do good and to share with uh share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to god uh the next slide is another example of a sacrifice uh paul is speaking and he says i have received full payment and more i am well supplied having received from epaphroditus the gifts the money you sent a fragrant aroma a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to god indeed we are to offer our whole selves as a living sacrifice do you remember our second reading it's on the next slide therefore i urge you brothers and sisters in view of god's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices these are the types of sacrifices we are to give but in each of these cases our sacrifices can be what is right or what is left they can be our best or what we can muster and just leftover bits they can honor god or dishonor god now don't mishear me we can only give and serve with what we have and the abilities and opportunities we have and so it will look different for different people but the big point of the passage is is it honoring to god is it what's right or what's left and the language of sacrifice is helpful here because just like an unblemished animal cost the giver

was sacrificial so sometimes our sacrifice will cost us be it in time or money or effort but the crucial thing to remember in all this is that we had to give such sacrifices not out of guilt but out of love and thanks remembering who god is you see the priest's problem in our passage today was not giving god the honor and reverence he deserved but the underlying reason was because they deliberately forgot who god is and so we had to deliberately remember who god is that he is the great king more than that he's also our loving and merciful father who gave his only son for you for me the price for our sin and life eternal was the blood of his son and god paid it god gave what was most precious to him his best and so how can we not in response give our best see this is why paul begins uh if you just go back linda uh to that romans 12 this is why he begins that verse by saying in view of god's mercy remember god and what he has done and then offer yourselves as a living sacrifice we have to remember who god is and what he has done for us in jesus so that we may joyfully give our best and what is right rather than begrudgingly give what is left and this means making you know giving the best in terms of priority and time so for example i know uh some people here who find it very difficult to come to church because of health reasons and yet they make the effort why because god is worth their best effort and not just what effort they have left for one family i know it meant giving god the best of their time as well and so they worked their weekend around church rather than working church and squeezing it into their weekend in fact they even pushed back their holiday and came to church first in the morning and then left for their holiday in the afternoon even though it meant they would arrive when it was dark and less convenient with kids you see they gave what was right of their time that was what was left of their time and and the stories could go on because i've seen so many people here in this congregation who honor god with the abilities resources and opportunities you have and so you do seek to be a living sacrifice even though sometimes it costs but can i encourage you to keep going and to keep going remembering the reason for it that god is a great king he deserves it and more than that he gave his loving and so he gave his son for us and so we are to give him our best in thanks in the words of our next hymn where the whole realm of nature mine well that would be an offering far too small for love so amazing so divine it demands my soul my life my all love you you you you you you you you you