

Malachi 1:6-2:9 "Roadkill Christianity?"

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Quit going to church. Stop singing. It's a waste of time. This place is full of hypocrites. Yes, maybe you've heard somebody say those things before, but today we hear God saying them. It's kind of hard to hear those words from the prophet Amos that they just sang, isn't it? Especially if you're sitting in a church during a worship service. But they reflect some of the heart of God's message to his people through the prophet Malachi today, too.

[1 : 02] We've talked about God's call to repentance, back to relationship with him when we're just playing church. Right? Micah told us about that.

And then when we're putting other things first and offering God only our leftovers rather than seeking first his kingdom. And God sent Haggai to tell his people that and call them back. And now Malachi comes with some similar words this morning. Just decades later after these other prophets, because God's people really struggle with this. We have to hear it over and over because we wander quickly, don't we? Some of you have told me that you've been convicted by God's word through the prophets over the last few weeks. And that's good, but have our lives altered drastically? To borrow an analogy from Pastor Peter, when it comes to our sin, we're often like someone who opens up the door to look into the crawl space of your house and sees mold growing there.

[2 : 15] And sees, oh, that's a problem. But then shuts the door back and walks away and carries on. It's there, but it won't bother me today.

But eventually it's going to invade everything and have devastating consequences if we don't repent and run back to God for his help.

So I'd urge you to listen again to God's word for his people to call us back to him again. Malachi has been freshly convicting to me, showing me my mold again this week.

Let's pray, and then we'll read together from God's word. Oh, Father, these words are not complicated, but they are hard to hear.

And we are slow to have our lives altered, me most. Holy Spirit, would you soften our hearts? Make us long to be molded into the image of Jesus.

[3 : 25] Speak your truth to us this morning that we might be the people that you created and redeemed us to be. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Malachi 1, beginning at verse 6, let's give careful attention to the reading of God's holy word. 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, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, how have we despised your name? 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?

[4 : 23] And when you offer those that are lame and sick, is that not evil? 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, says the Lord of hosts? 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. For from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name will be great among the nations. And in every place, incense will be offered to my name in a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted and its fruit, that is its food, may be despised. But you say, what a weariness this is. And you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick. And this you bring as your offering. [5 : 29] Shall I accept that from your hand, says the Lord? Lord, cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts.

And my name will be feared among the nations. And now, O priest, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not take it 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. Indeed, I have already cursed them because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your offspring and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it.

So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction was found in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity.

[6 : 39] For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth. For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way.

You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. And so I make you despised and debased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways, but show partiality in your instruction.

Amen. May God add his blessing to the reading of his word. Imagine that someone special you love and respect, the Queen of England, Nick Saban, Mickey Mouse, your beloved grandmother, someone like that was coming over to your house for dinner tonight.

What would be on the menu? What would you serve to them? Perhaps steak or seafood? Maybe a favorite family recipe for really yummy casserole, something you know about them that it's their favorite, maybe.

Some of us might even hire someone else to come cook because it's so important, we don't want to mess it up. But you're probably not going to offer them leftovers. You know, a slice of pizza and some green beans reheated in the microwave, right?

[8 : 13] None of us would even think. It sounds appalling to us to consider going out and just spending the afternoon running some errands and then, you know what, on the way home, we'll see what we drive by and I'll pick up some roadkill.

You know, that's what, I mean, armadillo is what, that's what I'm going to give them, right? No way. Now that may be cheap and easy, but it won't honor our special guest.

And yet sometimes we treat God that way. Our relationship with him is what I'll call roadkill Christianity, where we offer him something cheap and easy, costs us nothing, takes us little thought, because other things are just more important to us.

But hey, at least we had dinner with God, check. If that sounds extreme to you, it's meant to be. So were these words from the prophet Malachi to God's people in Jerusalem.

They're intended to call them, and now to call us, back to a passionate relationship with God, where we're revived to live for his glory and the extension of his kingdom to everyone around us, and that's what we're all about.

[9 : 42] That's where he's headed, and he begins this morning by exposing the false worship of God's people in his day.

They're back at the temple, remember? They're offering sacrifices, but they're not honoring God, their Father.

That's what he tells them, and the people say, what? Us? Ow! Now, 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? Verse 13, you bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as an offering.

Shall I accept that from your hand, says the Lord? Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. God has clearly told them not to worship him this way.

[10:45] Deuteronomy 15, for example. If it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish, whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God.

Pretty clear? But it's tempting, isn't it? It's tempting to give God roadkill, to invest our time and resources and energy in our own kingdoms and the things that matter so much to us and squeeze his worship in where we can on the margins of our lives.

The great British preacher, Martin Lloyd-Jones, told the story of a farmer who came in one morning to his wife with good news. He said, our cow has had two baby cows.

Here's what we're going to do. We're going to raise them, grow them up. Eventually, we're going to sell them for a good profit. We're going to give the money from one to God. We're going to keep the money from the other for our family.

That's how it's going to work. And she said, that's a wonderful idea. Which one is God's? And he said, oh, we don't have to worry about that. We'll decide that when we get there. The next morning, he came in with his wife.

[11:57] He had bad news. God's cow died. Figured out which one was which, didn't he? Didn't take him long. Worship that costs us little is false worship.

And so is half-hearted worship that is merely external. Verse 13 again. Here's what the people are saying.

What a weariness. And you snort at it. What a drag. This is so dull.

Does that ever happen at your house? Do we have to wake up and go to church this morning? I'm so tired.

Well, listen, darling. I mean, I know it's not the most exciting thing ever, but we have to go to church. I mean, it's one of those things you have to do. Or maybe you've had your own conversation.

[13:04] God, these neighbors are just such a pain. They're messy. I'm tired of dealing with them. I'm just not sure I'm going to have time for them this week. Sorry.

Or maybe in your own mind, it's just getting a bit dull following God's laws for my sexual purity.

I mean, I've been pretty good for a while, but it's not a huge deal anyway, right? Just one time. I'll still go to church Sunday. Yes, we will.

We'll sit in pews just like these. We'll be there. But in the meantime, we're coming to a worship service, but all the rest of the time, we're telling God that He's not worthy of our worship, that He's not our first love.

We may attend worship services, but our hearts aren't worshipping God. And that's the real problem that God has with false worship.

[14:08] So the fact that we give Him roadkill that costs us nothing, that takes little consideration from our hearts, dishonors Him.

That's the problem. It says that He is worth little. It tells your friends He's unimportant. It tells your kids He's a box to check, but not a God to love.

Listen to what He says here. This is all about His greatness and glory. He says things like, where is my honor? You despise my name.

You profane my name. My name will be great among the nations. I am a great king, and my name will be feared among the nations. Do you hear what He's saying? Then, just like serving roadkill to the queen, communicates that you think very little of her.

So worshipping God with occasional leftovers of your life communicates you think very little of Him. See, the problem with God impacting only one hour of your week when it's convenient to you, where many of us live sometimes, is that it says to your neighbor who doesn't know Jesus that Jesus is not gloriously worthy or eternally essential.

[15:32] And it leaves the nations who've never heard of Jesus without the hope of the gospel. That's why God's so upset, isn't it? This is a huge deal.

Verse 10, He says, Oh, there were one among you who would shut the doors that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain. I've no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts. I will not accept an offering from your hand.

For from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name will be great among the nations. You're not making it that way. And in every place, incense will be offered to my name, a pure offering, for my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.

The glory of His name is so vital to God that He would rather have empty churches than empty worship that doesn't display the worth of His great name.

Yikes! That's not exaggeration in a song. I'm not stretching the truth. It's what He tells them.

Somebody shut the doors! That's what He's all about, isn't it?

[16:49] This grand story that He's telling, that Malachi shows up in for a few decades, that you and I get to live in for a few decades, is about His glory filling the earth so that all nations will know Him and worship Him.

He will see to it. He says that true worship happens among the Gentiles themselves if the Jews won't get on board. That's the promise. And y'all, we're here this morning because that promise of His name being made great among the nations has actually been coming to life for centuries now. That's a big reason that we're gathered here. Could Malachi have even imagined Gentiles like this from the rising of the sun, think where they started on this Sunday, for example, all the way to its setting, magnifying God's name.

It's what He's talking about, but could He have even imagined what it was going to become? That's true worship in every place in all of life. True worship makes the name of God great because we give the best of all we have to Him from the bottom of our hearts with all that we are.

True worship delights in the presence of God when His people gather together, especially as the new temple where He dwells among us. And true worship moves outward because we long for the nations to know not how great we are, but how great and awesome our God is.

[18:24] That's true worship. He is indeed a great King. And our job as we experience His glorious grace is to express that grace to every neighbor, to every nation that they too might live their lives for the glory of King Jesus.

Is that what we're really all about? Because that's why we're here. But is it actually what we're about? Y'all, we've got to ask ourselves those questions and have those conversations.

How are we? And how are we not? All about that great story and that great mission that God has put us here for. I hope you'll take the time to talk about that with your family or your connect community or your connect community in a few minutes or your small group.

What does that look like in your life? We're not getting into a lot of particulars, but we need to. Remember how it worked in Malachi's day.

The holy presence of God, at that time dwelling particularly in the temple, was mediated to his people through the priests.

[19:41] The priests were the go-betweens, right? This one tribe, the Levites, out of the 12, those were the priests and they were the ones who went before God and they were the ones who represented him to the rest of the nation of Israel, to all God's people.

But that was only the beginning of the priests going on then. God also called the whole nation as a kingdom of priests.

All 12 tribes were to be a kingdom of priests who would represent God and carry his holy presence to all their neighbors and to all nations. Just as he calls every Christian today.

To mediate his presence dwelling in us by his Holy Spirit to all our neighbors and to all nations. 1 Peter 2, if you need a verse for it.

We are to know him and to make him known, not just in this place, but everywhere. That's true worship. Friends, that's why God has given us breath today.

[20:49] It's what his word tells us. It either is what we're about or it's not. That's why we're here. I read this week the story of a young new believer in Africa.

Having met Jesus, she was excited to go to worship services at her local church. And she did. And sure enough, during the service, this time came for the offering. And a plate started being passed through the congregation.

Being unfamiliar with this practice, she watched and noticed that people would reach into their pockets and put money in the plate. And that seemed to be the thing to do. Except, she was poor. She didn't have any money. She got the plate when it came around to her and didn't really know what to do with it. So she put it on the ground.

And then she stood in it and said in a loud voice, God, I don't have any money, but you can have all of me. That's true worship.

[21 : 52] Because it happens not just in these walls, right? She wasn't bringing to God something that would happen just while she was here for a little bit. But when all of us is living all for Jesus, that's true worship.

Amen? Amen? How about our lives? Roadkill Christianity?

Or stand in the offering plate Christianity? There you go. We'll call it that. That's something. It is now. Roadkill Christianity?

Whatever I can find at the end of the day? Or all of me? All the time? Everywhere? Everywhere? Everywhere? This call to true worship is for all of us.

But to be faithful to Malachi's message, I have to point out that he targets this message at those called to lead God's people, particularly to minister his word to them.

[23 : 00] They are especially responsible for the true or false worship of God's people. Look how he starts chapter 2 after already in chapter 1 addressing the priests.

Now he's reiterating his focus in chapter 2. Now, O priest, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not take it 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.

Indeed, I have already cursed them because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your offspring and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it.

So shall you know that I have sent this command to you. Even when you pronounce a benediction, a blessing, it will actually be a curse because you're not honoring my name.

See, there's a profound connection between those called to represent God to his people, to minister his word to them and the hearts of his people themselves.

[24 : 09] Whether or not they worship him appropriately and passionately with all of their lives is really connected to those priests. I got to be honest with you, I've been feeling the weight of that this week.

How does my relationship with God, our pastor's ministry of the word, our elders' shepherding of this flock impact all of us?

God says it's huge one way or the other. We need to be praying for our leaders, don't we? I asked you that personally in my last pastor's note and I'm really thankful for y'all.

So many of you pray for me. So many of you have come to me recently and said I'm praying for you. I always have been or I'm starting now. I'll take it either way. I need it so much.

I feel that need more and more and this passage will help you briefly know more about where to pray and where to push us as leaders of God's people.

[25 : 28] See, these priests in Malachi's day are false priests. They're actually encouraging God's people in their roadkill Christianity. Not speaking the truth of God's word clearly into their lives and so God starts with them.

God says they are not focusing on his name, verse 1, but rather focusing on their own name. That's what partiality in instruction means in verse 9.

False priests fear man more than God. Boy, that is hard for me. Then verse 8 highlights these dual realities that so often go together and we see it and you've watched it happen.

They, the priests, are walking away from God themselves. They're not following his word that they are to know and love.

They're not living for his glory. They're not worshiping him with their whole lives. And as a result, they're leading others away from God too.

[26 : 42] Those things go hand in hand, don't they? It's no surprise, but it is a grievous tragedy when that happens. If my life doesn't display the greatness and worth of God and my teaching doesn't exalt the glory and grace of God, then those magnificent truths become small.

In the eyes of those I'm leading. Just so in our day, we have many priests seeking celebrity status over humility.

Many have crashed on the rocks of personal moral failure and hidden sins rather than honest, fruit-bearing repentance and faith in their struggles.

Many have allowed political and social agendas to cloud the clarity of God's word and the gospel call because many of us struggle with fearing man more than God.

Is it any surprise that in our day, God has brought disgrace and shame upon preachers and leaders dishonoring his name? He says, feces on your faces in verse 3.

[28 : 00] He's serious because I will not allow one who dishonors me to continue with my blessing. Friends, please pray.

Pray for all of us as we're all called to be a kingdom of priests to the nations and pray particularly for your pastors and elders and any who minister God's word to you.

Listen to how it's supposed to work. Why God gives priests to represent him to his people. Verse 5, You see what he's saying?

His main concern is God's name, God's glory, right? You hear how he walks with God himself, speaking God's truth, knowing God's truth and as a result he leads others away from their sin to repent and turn back to God?

That's the way it's supposed to work. These words are describing Levi whose household God sets up as priests over his people to point them toward him.

[29 : 44] But who else does that sound like? Listen again. My covenant with him was one of life and peace and I gave them to him.

It was a covenant of fear and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth. No wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness and he turned many from iniquity.

Doesn't it sound like Jesus? Our great high priest. The one whose zeal for God's name bleeds through everything he does.

who always follows his father's will no matter what it costs him. Who actually speaks God's very law himself in whose mouth is no deceit ever found at all and who doesn't merely lead people away from iniquity but actually delivers them from their sin once and for all.

See, we get the true priest don't we? The one who finally does all of this perfectly and then comes to those of us called to be priests and you know what he doesn't do?

[31 : 05] He doesn't fling dung at us and say get it together you disgraceful priests can't you live for me more?

That's not what he does. No, the perfect priest at the end of all that perfection he takes the shame the disgrace the curse for us false priests on himself hanging on a cross outside the city beaten bloodied buried in a borrowed tomb he takes that on himself to rescue us false priests and to make us true sons that's our great hope, right?

That's that's where we find hope beloved by the perfect God because Jesus is perfect for us and he remakes us he does that indeed into priests who even today can be a part of making the name of our great king glorious among the nations so it's not as we find ourselves perfect but as we find ourselves in Jesus that we find God's true blessing isn't it?

Blessing now flows to us instead of curse and the blessing of God then flows through us to all our neighbors and all nations isn't that a greater and more glorious purpose than whatever else you're living for?

Say yes it is thank you Jesus for allowing us to be a part of that love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all sing that again in just a minute let's pray and ask him for his grace father we do need it your love may demand our soul our life our all but we'll forget that quickly we even forget the glorious good news that we don't have to make ourselves acceptable to you this afternoon that Jesus has done that so would you remind us of that and would you would you give us your grace to be faithful priests that's why we're here help us encourage each other in that give us your spirit that your name might be great in this place and among the nations in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host) and you who and you you you