

Malachi 1:7-11 Sermon

Intro

Theme: **We are called to give gifts that recognize the greatness of our God.**

1. The problem

2. The solution

1. The problem

Exposes sin – every time Scripture does so, somewhat difficult to preach. Difficult because we can never give God enough; can never give Him His due. Point is – why not? Why not? Is not the Scripture full of stories who would not give to God **that which cost them nothing?**

The woman of Luke 7 **who was a sinner** who anointed Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Mary of Bethany who broke the vial of perfume worth a year's wages to anoint the feet and head of Jesus. The widow who put two pennies into the temple offering box, giving all she had to live. Zaccheus who stood tall in the midst of the crowd to declare **Look Lord, here and now I give half of all my possessions to the poor, and if I have stolen anything from anyone, I will restore it 4 fold.**

Disciples who left fathers in the boat to go off and follow Jesus. Mathew who left taxes and toll booth to go forth and follow Jesus. Peter and John, who's words to the beggar at the gate of Jerusalem so beautifully reflected the dedication they had given to the Lord **Silver and gold I have not, but what I have I give to you.**

There is a beautiful story in the Old Testament – we turn to it again as an illustration this morning. David has sinned against the Lord. In his pride he has commanded Joab to number the fighting men of Israel. Joab resisted him, but the king's word was final. So Joab went out to number the warriors of David at David's insistence, but when the report came in 2 Samuel 24:10 gives this report **Then David's heart condemned him...so David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now I pray O LORD take away the iniquity of Your servant for I have done very foolishly.**

The Lord sends His messenger to David – the prophet Gad – and God offers David a choice of one of three punishments. David chooses to fall into the hands of the LORD alone, and so picks **three days of plague** upon Israel. The judgment is so great that David is broken again before the Lord and God commands David, through Gad, (v.18) **to go up, erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.**

Araunah sees David coming. He hears what David needs. Godly man that he is, Araunah responds to David **let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him – Look here are oxen for the burnt sacrifices...all these O king Araunah has given to the king – may the LORD your God accept you!**

And David response – **No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.**

Now there it is! There is the caption that strikes my heart, that humbles me, that smites my approach to God so frequently. David would not offer to the Lord **that which costs him nothing.**

Beloved in the Lord, this was what was missing among the people of God in the time of Malachi. This was what was missing.

A son honours his father and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honour? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts to you priests, who despise My name.

How did they despise it? The text goes on to tell us. They offer God the least. They offer Him what is worthless in their own eyes – they offer Him that which costs them nothing.

You see the lame and the blind and the sick of the flock – those were the ones the shepherd *wanted* to remove (if they could not be made well!). He didn't want the blind and the lame and the sickly animals mating, because it would weaken the stock – it would produce more of the same. Better by far to slaughter them, to remove them.

The way it worked out at that particular time was that God required of the His people animals for sacrifice to Him – sacrifices of thanksgiving or, what seems to be more in focus here – sacrifices of atonement.

And this was how the people approached these sacrifices – *what can we afford to lose?* What can we give up that will have the least impact on us *personally?* How can we present a sacrifice to the Lord, in essence, that **will cost us nothing.**

The answer seemed to present itself. Give Him the diseased! Give Him the sick! Give Him the blind – they create extra work for the shepherds, they take away from our leisure time, they pose a risk of contaminating the other sheep – give them to God. We'll take care of what God demands and it will actually be a benefit to us!

What a shame it is, when our view of God is such that He is honoured so little in our eyes that instead of giving Him it all, we give Him only what we can do without.

The priests ask **How have we defiled Your name?** And Malachi answers – **You offer God less than He deserves, and you are satisfied with it. You think nothing of it. You think God is like a beggar** who you throw a dollar to as you pass so you can feel you have done your duty. Verse 13 **You also say "What a weariness!"** Is it time to tithe again? Is it time to go to Bible study again? Is it time for devotions? Time to take that phone call from my needy friend – or my needy neighbour? Do I need to serve God and give to the LORD *again?*

And we have in our hearts the very opposite approach to that of David, or Zaccheaus, or Mary, or so many others of the people of God. We have not in our hearts the idea that we will give to the LORD that which *costs* us, but that we will give to the Lord only what *doesn't* cost us!

So if service to the church captures our private time, then perhaps that's something we just really don't want to be involved in any more. And if serious Bible study demands our time – then maybe we'll get away with skimming our Bibles instead of actually taking the time to dig.

Why is it such a sin? Because God is GREAT! That is the heart of this passage. He is GREAT. Verse 11 **My name shall be great.** Verse 11 b **My name shall be great.** Verse 14 **For I am a GREAT King.** Verse 6 because He is **THE Father and He is a Master (the Master).** Beloved it is such a sin to honour God the least because it is a sign that He is not honoured in our hearts and He is worthy of ALL honour!

Diagnose your hearts today – examine yourselves. Is your giving for the cause of Christ in terms of money – finances – is it a sacrifice you make joyfully; willingly? Or is it a weariness and the writing of another check. Or is it a drop in the bucket and something that barely makes a blip on your radar screen? Do you offer the LORD that which costs you nothing? Or is it a weariness to your heart? Or is it an act whereby you glorify and honour and exalt your God!

If you didn't get tax receipts, would you give less or more?

And what of your time – whether in devotion to God personally in prayer and Scripture reading, or in service, or in study with the saints in the fellowship. If you've been in the church for any period of time you know that the Bible studies all start with great numbers when it's a signup sheet on the back table, but they dwindle to nothing by the end of the year – and if you held on to the end and were one of the faithful – please don't let your hearts grow proud.

But do we give to the LORD the *best*, the firstfruits? Or when the work of God bites into our private time do we consider ourselves too religious, too fanatical, sacrificing too much. Its amazing how we can find ourselves too busy for volunteering or fellowship with the saints, or studying God's word in Bible studies and yet we can spend 80 hours at work a week or 3 rounds of golf a week, or hours of reading books or watching movies or playing games or... or ... or ...

Now God's not arguing against a balanced life, where we have time for a little exercise and we have time for our families, and we have a little time for relaxation – all these things, within reason, can be proper. The problem is that what we deem within reason often reflects where our real priorities lie. And where our real priorities lie so often says so little of our love and respect and honour for our God.

Don't judge the heart of anyone else, but examine yourselves.

The sin of it all is that God is worth far more. He is great, and He will be great among the nations.

Nowhere was this more exemplified than in the Person of Christ. He gave God everything! He withheld *nothing*. You want to follow Him – **take up your cross!** Because that's exactly what He did.

And the cross didn't just show how much God loved us – it also showed what He was worthy of.

There's an incredible little note in our text – verse 11. Its worth making hay out of! **For from the rising of the sun even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name; and a pure offering.**

Did that last line catch anyone as strange? Did it catch you as odd? Well, hopefully it didn't catch too many of us as odd – but can you see why it might have caught (or should have caught) the Israelites in the time of Malachi as odd?

It should have caught them as odd because Malachi, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, got his grammar wrong. He should have said **for from the rising of the sun even to its going down My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name; and pure offerings.**

That would have made sense – that would have fit the situation of the day – that would have reflected what God was saying to the people – each and every one of you, each of you is to bring a **pure** offering to God so that, in every place around the world, He will be offered **pure offerings**.

But it doesn't say that. Because there won't be many – not ultimately. No, ultimately there will only be One. **One pure offering, because His name is great.** One pure sacrifice because He is a **Great King.** Just one.

Behold and did My Saviour bleed, and did My Sovereign die. Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as

I?

Indeed He would, and indeed He did.

Beautifully, God does not rest the glory of His name upon the shoulders of the people, and beautifully He doesn't rest it upon a possibility for the future. No, right here, in Malachi 1 God speaks of this glory and this offering as a sure thing. **God's name will be great among the nations, and a pure offering will be offered in every place – together with pure incense, which is the prayers of the saints.**

And God's glory won't rest on our shoulders.

Its an amazing and ironic thing. For David says to Aheulah **I will not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing.** But strangely and oddly enough – that's all that God will accept.

In those words David said more than he realized. He captured the reality of the fact that, as one redeemed, our lives are to be lived for God sacrificially. We are not to live the Christian life that means we never sacrifice for God – that would be a weariness indeed!

But He also spoke as one who foreshadowed the ONE who would redeem. And HE would not offer the LORD that which cost **HIM nothing**. To the contrary, God would make **His soul an offering for sin**. And it would be **by His stripes that we are healed**.

That is the kind of God we have. A God who is a great and mighty King. A God who is worthy of everything, and nothing less. A God who we are now called to serve as God fulfills this very passage *in us and through us*. For beloved in the LORD **we are the Gentiles!** We are the former pagans! We are those by whom, in Christ, **bring pure offerings to the LORD because of the ONE pure offering of Christ. We are the ones who are to magnify and glorify the King of kings AS the King of kings!**

And we pray that it will provoke the Jews to jealousy! To realize that Jesus is indeed the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and He fulfills what God has promised! But how and when that will be done we do not control. But what we can control, by the power of God working in us, is how we will respond to the grace and the majesty and the love of God.

Will we view this God as a great and awesome God. Will we bring to Him that which costs us nothing, or will we take up our cross, forsake this world, and follow Jesus?

Beloved in the Lord God is worthy of your praise. In Christ Jesus, may we give it to Him.

And all God's people said, **Amen**.