

Title: Give God the Honor He Deserves

Text: Malachi 1:6–2:9

Imagine standing in a courtroom.

Your name is called. You step forward. The room quiets, and now you are the one being addressed.

There is a judge seated above you, and you feel the weight of that moment.

You are aware of where you are and who you are standing before.

It changes how you listen. It shapes how you respond.

You take it seriously.

In the Old Testament, the word often translated “glory” is the Hebrew word *kavod*.

At its core, it carries the idea of weight.

Something that is heavy, significant, worthy of honor.

To give God glory is to treat Him as weighty.

So here is the question.

What happens when God **no longer** feels weighty to us?

What happens when we approach Him, speak to Him, and even worship Him, without a sense of His greatness?

That is exactly what was happening in Malachi’s day.

The people of Israel had returned from exile. The temple had been rebuilt, and worship had been restored.

From the outside, everything looked as it should.

But something had changed.

Over time, the weight of who God is no longer shaped how they approached Him.

The priests became **careless** and the people became **indifferent**.

Worship continued, sacrifices were offered, the system was in place, but it had lost its substance.

They were going through the motions, while treating God as though He were ordinary.

And God confronts them.

Main Idea: When We Treat God as Common, We Dishonor His Holy Name

So here is two questions we need to answer.

What does it look like when God no longer carries weight in our lives?

And what happens when the leaders who are called to guard His worship no longer treat Him as holy?

Malachi answers that question directly.

And he begins with their worship.

1. Casual Worship Dishonors God's Name (vs. 6-14)

Malachi 1:6 ESV

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, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"

A son and a servant who are living in the way they should be will honor and fear their father and their master.

God, through Malachi uses these two positive examples to show how the Priests of Israel are doing the exact opposite.

Here again we have the people of God questioning or disputing God. (*The Second Disputation*)

And they ask this question.

"How have we despised your name?"

Again, just like the last dispute, this question is not one of curiosity.

This question is predicated on defensive accusation.

The priests here are basically saying, we have done nothing wrong.

But they did and God takes the opportunity to show them exactly what they have done.

Malachi 1:7-8 ESV

⁷ 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. ⁸ 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? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.

What does this mean?

Malachi is preaching into a very specific moment in Israel's history.

After the decree of Cyrus the Great in 539 BC, the Jewish exiles returned to the land.

The temple was rebuilt by 516 BC, and for a time there was real enthusiasm for the worship of God.

But that enthusiasm didn't last.

By the time of Malachi, that early zeal had faded.

The people were going through the motions.

Worship was still happening, but the heart behind it was gone.

What had once been vibrant had become routine, even careless.

And nowhere was that more evident than in the priests.

According to the Law, the priests were responsible to guard the purity of worship.

They were to inspect the sacrifices and ensure that only animals without blemish were offered to the Lord, as required in passages like [Leviticus 22](#).

But instead of protecting the worship of God, they were permitting corruption in it.

Malachi points directly to the problem in verses 7 through 9.

The priests were offering blind animals, lame animals, and sick animals on the altar.

These were animals that had no real value.

They were the leftovers.

The kind of animals no one else would want – especially God!

Which means this was not simply a procedural mistake.

It was a heart issue.

They were giving to God what cost them nothing.

Malachi exposes this with a sharp and very practical comparison.

He essentially says, *“Try offering that to your governor.”*

In other words, you wouldn't dare bring a defective gift to a human ruler, yet you bring it to the Lord of Hosts.

Even in the Persian world, subjects brought the best of their flocks to the king.

Historical records from the reign of Darius I show that quality offerings were expected as a sign of honor and loyalty.

Malachi's point is clear.

They were treating God with less honor than a pagan king.

What is striking is that the priests don't seem fully aware of the seriousness of what they are doing.

Their questions throughout the chapter reveal a kind of half-conscious disrespect.

It is the slow erosion of reverence.

It is what happens when people begin to lose sight of who God.

Then Malachi presses even further in verse 9. He tells them to *“entreat the favor of God.”*

But the statement is loaded with irony.

How can they expect God to show them favor while they are dishonoring Him in worship?

The implication is sobering.

Their sacrifices are unacceptable, and their prayers are ineffective.

God will not be approached on those terms.

There is even an echo here of the priestly blessing from [Numbers 6](#).

The very priests who were called to pronounce blessing on the people have, by their actions, forfeited the privilege of experiencing that blessing themselves.

So, this passage is not just about bad sacrifices.

It is about a broken view of God.

And when your view of God is diminished, your worship will always follow.

Look at what God says next...

Malachi 1:10–11 ESV

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

In verses 10 and 11, the Lord draws a sharp contrast.

In verse 10, God says something startling.

He would rather the temple doors be shut than have His name dishonored through empty worship.

He says plainly, *“I have no pleasure in you... I will not accept an offering from your hand.”*

That is a devastating statement.

Worship is still happening, but God is rejecting it.

Then in verse 11, everything shifts.

While Israel’s priests are dishonoring Him, God declares that from the rising of the sun to its setting, His name will be great among the nations.

In every place, pure worship will be offered to Him.

So, God is rejecting corrupted worship in Jerusalem, while declaring that He will be honored across the whole earth.

Israel had the privilege of representing God, but they failed in that calling.

And God makes it clear; His glory is not dependent on them.

If His people will not honor Him, He will raise up those who will.

And this points forward to what Jesus Himself said in [John 4](#).

There is coming a time when worship will no longer be tied to a location, not this mountain, not even the temple in Jerusalem, but true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

That is exactly the direction Malachi is pointing.

This is both judgment and promise.

It is judgment because God rejects empty worship.

It is promise because God's name will still be exalted, globally.

And at the center of it all is this principle.

God does not accept worship based on activity alone. He evaluates the heart.

The issue was not just what they offered, it was what their offerings revealed.

Their sacrifices showed that their hearts had grown cold toward God.

That is why *"pure offering"* matters so much.

God is not lowering His standard.

He is pointing to a time when genuine, wholehearted worship will be restored.

God will be honored.

The only question is whether His people will now honor Him from the heart.

But it doesn't get better, it get's worse!

Malachi 1:12-14 ESV

But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food, may be despised. ¹³ 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! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. ¹⁴ 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.

In verses 12 through 14, the focus shifts.

Earlier, God exposed what the priests were doing. Now He exposes how they were thinking.

They are treating His table as polluted and contemptible.

The issue is no longer just their actions, it is their attitude.

They have grown to despise the very worship they were called to lead.

You hear it in their words, *"What a weariness this is."*

Worship had become a burden.

What should have been a privilege now felt like a chore.

What is striking is that they seem to know something is wrong, but they do nothing about it.

They see the problem, but they do not care enough to fix it.

Their indifference reveals a cold heart.

Then the indictment deepens.

It is no longer just blind, lame, and sick animals.

Now they are accepting animals taken by violence.

They are not just careless, they are complicit.

And the passage closes with a curse.

The one who has a healthy animal, vows it to God, and then offers something defective is condemned.

That is deception.

And the reason it matters is because of who God is.

"I am a great King," says the Lord.

That is the issue.

Their worship was small because their view of God was small.

And the implication is clear.

Anyone who knowingly participates in this shares in the guilt.

Because God does not deserve empty worship.

He deserves reverence from the heart.

This is consistent with how God has always dealt with His people.

In [Leviticus 22:20](#), God commands,

[Leviticus 22:20 ESV](#)

You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you.

The standard was clear.

In [Isaiah 1:13](#), God says,

Isaiah 1:13 ESV

Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

And in [Amos 5:21–22](#)

Amos 5:21–22 ESV

“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.

Why? Because underneath it all, [Psalm 95:3](#) reminds us,

Psalm 95:3 ESV

³ For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

That is the issue.

They knew the standard.

They ignored the heart.

They treated God lightly.

And God would not accept it.

So, this passage is not just about bad sacrifices. It is about a broken view of God.

As A. W. Tozer once said.

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” - Tozer

And when your view of God is diminished, your worship will always follow.

So, what does this mean for us?

We may not bring animal sacrifices, but we still bring worship to God.

And the question is not, *Do we show up?*

The question is, *What are we bringing when we do?*

Are we giving God our attention, or just our leftovers?

Are we engaged, or just going through the motions?

Are we honoring Him as King, or treating Him as common?

It is possible to sing the songs, hear the sermon, even serve in ministry, and still give God a heart that is distant.

Listen, God is not impressed with activity.

He is looking for sincerity.

Come to God with a heart that is awake.

Come to Him with reverence.

Come to Him ready to give Him your best.

Because He is not just part of your life.

He is the reason for you life and your new life in Him!

He is the great King.

So here is what we have seen.

Corrupt worship does not start at the altar; it starts in the heart.

But now Malachi turns the spotlight even brighter.

Because when the leaders of God's people allow this kind of worship to continue, they are not just tolerating the problem.

They are responsible for it.

2. Corrupt Leadership Dishonors God's Name (vs. 2:1-9)

There are four things the Lord wants to communicate to the priests in these verses.

A command

A warning

A reminder

An exposure

God gives them a command (vs. 1-2)

Malachi 2:1-2 ESV

¹ "And now, O priests, this command is for you. ² 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.

In verses 1 and 2, God speaks directly to the priests.

“And now, O priests, this command is for you.”

This is a personal focus on the leaders.

The command is simple and weighty.

They are to give honor to the name of the Lord.

That is why the priesthood existed.

They were to represent God rightly, lead the people in worship, and uphold the holiness of His name.

But they were not doing that.

So, God warns them.

“If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name... then I will send the curse upon you.”

That phrase, *“take it to heart”* matters.

God is pressing beyond outward actions.

He is addressing the inner life.

The issue runs deeper than what they were doing.

It reaches into who they were.

And the result is severe.

“I will send the curse upon you. I will curse your blessings.”

The very center of their ministry is affected.

This likely includes both their provision and their role in blessing the people.

The priests were meant to be a channel of blessing.

Now that channel is being cut off.

Then God says something sobering.

“I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.”

This is already happening.

Why does this matter?

The priests were leading the people.

Their lives shaped the direction of the nation.

If they honored God, the people would follow.

If they treated Him lightly, the people would learn the same pattern.

That is the weight of spiritual leadership.

Leaders set the tone. And in this case, the tone was dishonor.

God warns them of judgment (v. 3)

Malachi 2:3 ESV

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.

In verse 3, the warning becomes reality.

This is graphic, and it is meant to be.

The waste from the sacrifices, the part taken outside the camp and burned, is now placed on the priests themselves.

This is public humiliation.

Under the Law, uncleanness disqualified a priest from serving.

So, this is not only shameful, but it also removes them from ministry.

The ones who stood before God are now treated like the refuse they handled.

The picture is clear.

Instead of honor, they were disgraced.

Instead of standing before God, they were cast out.

There is also a reversal here.

The priests were meant to lead the people into God's favor, to see them accepted before Him.

Now they themselves are carried away with the refuse.

Their role has collapsed.

Then God says He will rebuke their *“offspring.”*

Whether that refers to their families or their provision, the point is the same.

Their future is being cut off.

This is total.

God is removing them from the place they once held.

They treated what was holy as common.

Now they themselves are treated as unclean.

God reminds them of their calling (vs. 4-7)

Malachi 2:4-7 ESV

So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. ⁵ 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. ⁶ True instruction was 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. ⁷ 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.

In verses 4 through 7, the tone shifts.

God reminds them of what the priesthood was meant to be.

He points back to His covenant with Levi.

“My covenant with him was one of life and peace.”

That is what the priesthood was designed to produce, life, peace, and a right relationship with God.

And Levi responded rightly.

He feared God.

He stood in awe of His name.

He spoke truth.

He walked with God in integrity.

And he turned many away from sin.

That is the picture.

A priest who knows God, honors God, teaches truth, and helps people walk rightly before Him.

Then verse 7 summarizes the role clearly.

“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.”

The priest was not just a participant in worship.

He was a teacher of truth.

He was responsible to know God’s Word, protect it, and pass it on faithfully.

That was the calling.

But that is not what was happening.

Instead of guarding knowledge, they corrupted it.

Instead of leading people toward God, they led them away.

The contrast is unmistakable.

God holds up the standard, and the breach is clear.

God exposes their failure (vs.8-9)

Malachi 2:8–9 ESV

⁸ 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, ⁹ and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.”

In verses 8 and 9, the contrast becomes direct.

“But you have turned aside from the way.”

After holding up the example of Levi, God now speaks plainly to these priests.

They have abandoned their post.

And that failure shows up in three ways.

First, they caused many to stumble.

Instead of leading people in truth, their teaching led people away from it.

The ones who were responsible to guide others in God's Word became a source of confusion and spiritual harm.

Second, they corrupted the covenant of Levi.

God had established the priesthood to preserve truth and promote righteousness.

Their actions undermined that entire purpose.

What was meant to protect the people was now working against them.

Third, they showed partiality in their instruction.

They did not apply God's Word consistently.

Their teaching and decisions were influenced by their desires, not by truth.

Justice was no longer equal. It was selective.

And the result is clear.

"So I make you despised and abased before all the people."

The ones who were meant to be honored are now dishonored.

The ones who were meant to lead are now disregarded.

Why?

Because they did not keep God's ways.

And they failed in the very role they were called to fulfill.

Priests were called to teach truth, [Leviticus 10](#).

God judges leaders who mislead, [Jeremiah 23](#), [Ezekiel 34](#).

God shows no partiality, [Deuteronomy 10](#).

So when leaders distort truth, people stumble.

"Nothing is more inconsistent than that those who are appointed to be guides should lead others astray." - John Calvin

(Commentary on the Minor Prophets, [Malachi 2](#))

So, what does this mean for us?

Leadership carries weight.

If you lead in any way, pastor, teacher, parent, people are learning from you.

Your life and your words are shaping others.

So here is the question.

Are you helping people move toward God, or making it harder for them to follow Him?

Are you handling God's Word carefully?

Are you applying it consistently?

Because when leaders move away from God, people stumble.

And for all of us, this matters.

Who's life are you shaping ?

Is what you are teaching faithful to God's Word?

Lead with integrity.

Handle God's Word with care.

Live in a way that helps people follow the Lord.

Because His **NAME** is at stake.

Make it easier for people to follow God by how you live and what you teach. God takes this very seriously.

And so should you.

Conclusion

When we treat God as common, we fail to honor the weight of His holy name.

And when that sense of His weight fades, everything else begins to shift with it.

Worship becomes routine, leadership loses its clarity, and over time we stop responding to God as He really is.

This week, make a deliberate adjustment.

When you come to God, whether in His Word, in prayer, or when we gather as a church, slow yourself down enough to remember who you are approaching.

Refuse to rush past that.

Give Him your attention and your heart.

Think back to that courtroom.

You step forward, and you feel it immediately.

You don't have to remind yourself to take it seriously.

The moment itself presses that on you.

Now carry that into your relationship with God.

The problem in Malachi is not that they stopped worshiping.

It's that they no longer felt the weight of the One they were worshiping.

And that is always where things begin to break down.

So, as you walk into this week, do not treat Him as familiar or ordinary.

Remember who He is.

And respond to Him accordingly.