

**04/03/22**

**“Honoring God & Giving Him Our Very Best”  
Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church**

***Malachi 1:6-14***

This morning, I would like to welcome you to our services. My name is Pastor David Pranga. I am one of the pastors at Brewster Baptist Church. Whether you are watching online or are here in the sanctuary, I am so glad that you are joining us. Pastor Doug and Jill, along with thirty-three members from our congregation, are away in Greece. Please keep this group in your prayers, as they will be flying back to the United States on Tuesday.

For those who are new today, we are in a series called, “The Bible – A Story of Love, Belonging, Redemption, and Hope.” We are going through the entire Bible, picking one story from each of the sixty-six books. Today, we are finishing the minor prophets and the entire Old Testament.

There is a story that had been told of a Baptist Church looking for a pastor. After a few candidates had been vetted and interviewed, one candidate preached a sermon and “wowed” the church. Everyone agreed, “That’s our pastor.” The pastor would start the next week. On the very first Sunday of the pastor’s ministry, he walked to the pulpit, opened his Bible and preached a very powerful sermon that was Biblically sound, theologically accurate, and the application matched everyday life. People in the pews nudged each other and said, “This is just who we need!”

On the second Sunday, he walked to the pulpit, opened his Bible, and once again preached a powerful sermon that was Biblically sound, theologically accurate, and the application matched everyday life. Yet, it was the same sermon from the week before. Even though the congregation thought it was a little strange to hear the same sermon twice, the pastor spoke with such passion and conviction. The people did not know what to make of it. They did learn something new in hearing the message a second time. On the third Sunday, the pastor walked up to the pulpit, read the same message, and preached the same sermon again. Now the members of the congregation were concerned. Here was this great preacher, but he kept preaching the same message. A few church members approached a group of deacons, “If he has the audacity to preach that same sermon one more time – then you need to have a talk with him.” On the fourth Sunday, the pastor walked to the pulpit, read the same passage and preached the same sermon once again. The people in the congregation were in an uproar. Who is this pastor we hired?

After the service, the deacons requested a meeting with the new pastor. The Pastor asked, “What can I do for you?” They answered, “We are a bit concerned that you are preaching the same sermon every Sunday. Our question is: Do you have another sermon?” The preacher took off his glasses and responded, “I do have another sermon. But this church hasn’t obeyed the first one yet.”

I read that story, and it reminded me of the past eleven weeks as we have studied the minor prophets. All the stories are very similar in nature. The people have a good relationship with God. Then the people begin rebelling. They begin to go their own way and turn their backs on God. Then we see God, in his great love for his people, brings a prophet to the people. The prophet is a messenger who gives a challenge to the people to repent and turn from their wicked ways. In each case, the people must make a decision. Sometimes the people repent. Sometimes they don’t. This has been a similar message all through the minor prophets.

Today I will talk about the last of the minor prophets and the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi. It's a very short book with only four chapters, and you can easily read it in one sitting. I want to encourage you to read it this week, but I want to warn you that it is not a warm, fuzzy book.

I would like to give you some history about the book of Malachi. Malachi is a contemporary of Nehemiah and Ezra. The people of Israel had been in exile and then returned home to Jerusalem. Nehemiah led the people in rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem which provided protection and security for the people. Ezra helped the people come back spiritually, and life was good. Fast forward, and decades passed by. The joy of praising God left the people. God had continued providing safety to the Israelites from their enemies. This group of Israelites who once praised God and were thankful, changed. Their hearts had become cold towards God and filled with apathy. The Israelites moved from joyful to lukewarm, indifferent and lazy. Their faith in God became irrelevant. They were only going through the motions. As you read the book of Malachi, you see a spirit of skepticism and complacency among the people and the priests. Their apathy got so bad that the people began to question God and if he was still relevant to them today.

1. Does God really love us? (They forgot their past and what God had done for them.)
  2. Does serving God really matter? (Of course, serving God is important to our faith.)
- You could say, the Israelites and their priests lost their sense of “honoring God and giving Him their very best.”

What does God do? God summons a new prophet, this time a man named Malachi. It is Malachi's responsibility to be God's voice to the people, to set the priests and people straight, and to “awaken” and “arouse” the people to focus on honoring God and giving Him their very best.

The book of Malachi is not a feel-good book. The message is very negative, yet at the end of the book, there is a glimmer of hope looking forward to a brighter day. Listen to this scripture reading from *Malachi 1:6-14 (NIV)* where he is talking to the priests, the spiritual leaders of the community:

*“A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty. “It is your priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’ “By offering defiled food on my altar. “But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’ “By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible. When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? 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. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the LORD Almighty. “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands. My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you profane it by saying, ‘The Lord's table is defiled,’ and, ‘Its food is 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. “Cursed is the cheat 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.*

As I read this uplifting passage from the Lord, I thought about what I could possibly share with you today. There were two observations or major problems that I took from this passage that we can learn from: their failure to honor and respect God: *“A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 1:6*

There is a reason why the Lord says this to his people. Because of the great apathy among the Israelites and priests towards God, the people had lost sight of what God had done for them through the years. Consequently, they failed to honor God. So, God sent Malachi to the people of Israel. Malachi was there to remind the people how far they had fallen. Their obvious political enemies were gone. Their need for God was far less, yet this left room for the not-so-obvious enemies – pride, compromise, laziness, and indifference towards God. They could no longer tell right from wrong in God’s eyes. The people and priests failed to honor and respect the Lord.

How we see God is reflected in our attitude, behaviors, and actions. As you read the book of Malachi, it becomes painfully obvious that the people failed to honor God. The priests were the spiritual leaders of the people of Israel whose main responsibility was to honor God through carrying out the Laws of Moses which dealt with sacrifices. They oversaw animal sacrifices and were responsible for teaching the people what was acceptable and honorable to God. Yet, the priests broke the very law they were supposed to obey and teach the people. According to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 1-7), these animals had to be perfect; nothing imperfect could be brought to the altar of God and accepted.

These sacrifices represented and pointed the people to the Lamb of God. As we will find out in the New Testament, God is talking about Jesus Christ. Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Son of God, and perfect in everything, the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus took our place on the cross for us.

In the Old Testament, the people were to bring their very best animals to be sacrificed and given to the priests as a way to honor God. These sacrifices represented a “sin offering” for the people. Unfortunately, the priests looked the other way when people started bringing sick or lame animals to sacrifice. God was offended first by the priests for allowing this to happen, and second, by the people who would bring their worst animals and believe they were honoring God. Malachi even mentioned that the priests knew these offerings of blemished animals would be rejected by the governor of the land. Yet, by accepting these blemished animals, the priests were telling everyone that these animals were good enough for the Lord. If the governor would not accept these offerings, why would God accept these blemished animals? In both these cases, the priests and people of Israel failed to honor God. They were unfaithful to God. They failed to give God their very best. That is really the theme of this chapter and the book of Malachi.

There is glimmer of hope that I want to share with you in *Malachi 3:7: “Return to me and I will return to you.”* What we see through Malachi and through the entire Minor Prophets is that God wants the people to return to Him. We see this continued love towards His people, because God sends twelve minor prophets to his people. There is one foundational truth which gives me hope!

### **Key Truth: God Has Great Love for His People**

Despite all the awful things that the Israelites and priests have done, God never stops loving his people. God still wants a relationship with them. God can forgive them. They need to acknowledge their sin, turn back to God, and return to obeying His ways.

### **God Has Great Love for Us**

I know this is true for me as well as for you - despite the sins we have committed towards God, despite the times when we have turned our back on Him, despite the things we might believe that God could never forgive - God loves you and will forgive you. We need to acknowledge our sin, ask for forgiveness, turn back to God, and honor God in all we do.

Application: Our actions, our attitude and our behavior should reflect our love for God. God does not want us just going through the motions of our faith. If we truly love God, we want every area in our life to reflect that. We want to give God our very best. I am reminded of the key verse: *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."* *Matthew 22:37* I have few questions to get you thinking in each category. Think of it as The Four Ts: time, talent, temple, and treasures:

### **Honoring God with your Time**

1. Do you use your time to honor God?
2. Do you make time in a day for God? (Prayer, reading the Bible, meditation)
3. Do you make time for church and small group a priority in your life?

### **Honoring God with your Talents, Gifts, and Abilities**

1. I believe that God has given each of us talents, gifts, and abilities. When we use these gifts to help other people, we bring honor to God. Are you using your talents, gifts, and abilities to help people?
2. If you are a good cook, can you bring over a meal to a family who needs help?
3. If you are good at fixing things, are you helping people that need help? (Building and Grounds, Handy Helpers)
4. If your talent lies in working with children, do you help out someone who needs childcare? (helping in the nursery, teaching a class such as children's Sunday school)
5. Are you outgoing with a warm, friendly face? (You can pass out bulletins or greet people coming in the door)

### **Honoring God with your Temple (Body)**

1. Do you realize that our bodies are the temple of God? God lives inside of us.
2. What are the things you are putting into your body and mind?
3. Are the movies, television shows, or things you watch on the phone pleasing to God?

### **Honoring God with your Treasure**

1. *"Where is your treasure, your heart will also be."* *Matthew 6:21* God wants us to honor him with our offerings just as the Israelites were supposed to honor God with their sacrifices. Let me ask you, are you honoring God with treasure?

Summary: God cares very much how we honor Him with our time, talent, temple, and treasure. We need to honor God and give Him our very best. Let us pray.