Malachi – Reconnecting with God in Worship

There is a tendency among many Christians today to view God as our close friend or buddy. Because of this closeness of relationship, many have unfortunately become complacent and flippant in how they relate to God. While it is true that because of God's love and commitment towards us that we have a close relationship with God (see previous study), he is still the Lord of the universe and there is a proper way to relate and worship him.

That last point is very counter-intuitive in our world today whereby our standard of "intimacy" is tied up with our transparency, honesty and equality with one another. This is particularly true in our Australian context and culture where egalitarianism is highly valued. However, the fact of the matter is that God is not our equal and he demands our honour and our worship. In our passage today, the people of Israel were guilty of defiling God in their worship of him. Let's see how God responds to them.

Launch

1) Have someone in your small group look up the protocols when meeting and greeting a member of the Royal Family, particularly the Queen. Why do you think those protocols exist? What do you think are the consequences of not following those protocols?

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Read Malachi 1:6-14

2) What are YHWH's[1] accusations against the Israelites? (v6-7)

    a. How have the Israelites done what YHWH accused them of doing? (v8)

    b. What is wrong with what they are doing? (cf. Lev 22:17-20) What do you think this shows about their heart towards YHWH?

3) What does that kind of attitude of the Israelites towards YHWH tell the nations about who YHWH is? (v10-13)

4) What kind of animal sacrifices are they bringing to YHWH? (v13-14)

[1] Please refer to the end note Study 2 of Malachi for the reason of using YHWH instead of "the Lord" throughout this series.

a. What does that show about the place of YHWH in their lives if the people chose not to sacrifice the appropriate animals that they actually have?

5) List as many things as you can about the things that YHWH has done for his people before Malachi. How do you think the Israelites should respond to YHWH given these things?

6) What is YHWH's general response in this passage to his people's blemished sacrifices? What then should they do now? (v9)

7) What are some of the things that Christians do today that show that God is not first in their lives?

a. What examples of "blemished sacrifices" that you yourself have offered?

b. How do these "blemished sacrifices" tell the nations about who God is today?

Read Romans 12:1-2

8) According to Paul, what is our true and proper worship? How do you think that looks like in the different circumstances of your life?

9) How can you help each other in making sure that we worship God and bring him acceptable "sacrifices" today? (cf. Romans 12:1-2)

The Israelites have "cheated" YHWH in their worship of him. As we mentioned in our previous study, YHWH has been committed to his people, redeeming, saving, prospering, and protecting them throughout their history, but yet they do not respond in a way that he has set forth. They cannot give the excuse that they did not know how YHWH wanted them to respond as he had given them explicit instructions in the Law. As a result, YHWH rejects their blemished sacrifices, saying that his name is to be great among the nations and to be feared. The Israelites' flippant and downright dishonourable worship of YHWH defiles him and profanes his name among the nations

As Christians today, we do the same when we do not worship in an acceptable way. We profane and defile God's name if we are not serious in our worship of God. Offering the whole of our lives as a living sacrifice is the only true and proper worship of God in view of the wonderful things that he has done for us in Christ. (Rom 12:1-2) That is the least we can do when he has saved, redeemed, adopted, loved, protected, reconciled us through Jesus Christ our Lord in the power of the Spirit.