***Malachi 1 “A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’ 7“You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ 8And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. 9“But now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. 10“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” Says the Lord of hosts, “Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. 11For 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; For My name shall be great among the nations,” Says the Lord of hosts. 12“But you profane it, In that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’ 13You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!’ And you sneer at it,” Says the Lord of hosts. “And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?” Says the Lord. 14“But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished - For I am a great King,” Says the Lord of hosts, “And My name is to be feared among the nations.***

Tonight, we’re back in Malachi. As Alan and I were talking about last week, Malachi writes just before God’s 400 years of silence, but those 400 years were anything but silent. They were full of violence, war, rebellion, and desecration of the Temple. We all remember when we were studying the book of Daniel that we talked about Alexander the Great, the 4 generals that took his kingdom when he died, Antiochus Epiphanes defiling the Temples. All of this happened during the 400 years of silence. The Persians fell, the Greeks rose, the Greeks fell, and the Romans rose. Silence of God doesn’t mean things aren’t being done according to His plan and purpose. It simply means that no prophetic words are recorded. History continued and His Story remained on track.

Tonight, we continue with Malachi 1.God has started by saying, “I have loved you, but you question how I have loved you. You miss My blessings. You look at your woes instead of looking at My provision. Verse 5 last week ended - *Your eyes shall see, And you shall say, ‘The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.* God indeed is magnified by the Gentile nations.

In verse 6. It says - *A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’* God is God, the Master, the Father of all Creation. He has all rights to govern His creation and His created beings as He sees fit. He is worthy of all Glory and highest esteem. He gives us the very breath of life and He can expect reverence and honor, respect and fear, trust and obedience, praise and love. The priests should have been leading the way with this praise, as God’s anointed. Instead, they have dishonored God and despised His name. They have been disobedient to His call, failed to teach what they have been called to teach, seeking their glory and enrichment above Gods. In denial, the priests may ask, “In what way?” People do the same today. We’re called to honor, but we dishonor, we’re called to serve others, but we serve our flesh, we seek our ease and glory, neglecting God’s people. When we ask, “How so?” God is glad to be specific. He’ll be specific today and He was specific then.

Verses 7-8 *You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ 8And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts.* ***Y****ou offer defiled food on My altar.* We offer God our best always! When we offer less than our best, we pollute the offering. As the priests offered the bread on the altar, something had been reduced – quality of the ingredients, quantity of the offering. God knew. God knows when we are giving what’s left and not what’s right. It wasn’t just with Cain and Abel that God had the issue of offering highest and best. It has gone on from the time of Cain until this very day. *But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.* How have we defiled You? God’s answer has the idea that the priests are taking more of the offering than they are allowed and taking the best for themselves. The people know what the priests are doing. By the dishonesty, the priests are diminishing the value of worship, and thereby are diminishing the reverence of God. I often think of this when I hear of pastors using the church as their piggy bank. We are called to steward God’s resources with reverence, fear, knowing that, if the members see questionable actions, it can damage their worship. *And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts.* Leviticus 22 tells us that animals for offering are to be perfect and without blemish. To offer less is evil. Yet, they offer to God what they will not dare offer to a governor. Clearly this demonstrates contempt for God. Likewise, when we offer less than our best talents, time, love, and money, we are committing evil before God.

Verses 9-10 *But now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. 10“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” Says the Lord of hosts, “Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.* ***B****ut now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts.* The priests and the people know what they’ve done. Malachi is saying, “Stop denying **our** sin and entreat the Lord!” Malachi is speaking directly to the priests, as they are charged with leading the people in the Law. *Will He accept you favorably?* God may hear and yet relent. *“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” Says the Lord of hosts, “Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.* Who among you will stop the practice of worthless offerings and demand that the requirements be met? Who will reverence God and lay aside self? God says, “I will not accept your offering or take pleasure in your second rate sacrifice.” It takes courage to stand and declare the truth of God, when so many are enjoying the fruits of wickedness and perversion.

Verse 11*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; For My name shall be great among the nations,” Says the Lord of hosts.* God now changes gears. He will bring His Salvation to the Gentiles, that He will be honored among all nations. If the people of Israel think God is dependent on them, they are wrong. The Gentiles will reverence the Lord, love Him, and give honor to His name. Praise will rise as incense, which the Jews associate closely with Temple prayers. Christ will take the position of High Priest, tearing the veil of the Temple from top to bottom, opening us to God through His work. Zechariah 14:16 says *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.* Worship will happen in all nations, through Christ. In John 4:21 Jesus says, *Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.* We worship God in spirit and in truth, which is a pure offering before God. Our offering is praise, love, and obedience. God prefers obedience above sacrifice. IN this verse, Malachi reveals the end of rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices and the new, pure worship of Jesus.

Verse 12 *But you profane it, In that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.* Both the priests and the people profane God’s name and take His Name and worship in vain by the way they conduct themselves. The Lord’s altar, His table has been defiled. The priests gripe that the portion of offerings God allows is not enough. The word for contemptible has the idea of a poor allowance, an unacceptable wage for the position.

Verse 13 *You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!’ And you sneer at it,” Says the Lord of hosts. “And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?” Says the Lord.* The Lord continues with a sense of “to top it all off” the priests, most offensively, and the people as well say being in service to God and keeping His commandments is wearisome. What a burden. They sneer at the thought of keeping God’s ways. That which is forbidden to be offered to the Lord is offered. This is most contemptible of all.

Verse 14 *“But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished - For I am a great King,” Says the Lord of hosts, “And My name is to be feared among the nations.* God now curses those with a false heart, holding back what is really God’s. God expects perfection, without blemish. They have one, but offer blemished because of a deceitful heart. God will not accept cast offs – in sacrifice, service, or worship. Ecclesiastes 5:5 tells us *Better not to vow than to vow and not pay*. God is a great King. Our failure to honor Him as such makes Him no less great, but makes us far less able to receive His blessings.

 This week, let’s take what we see in Malachi and prayerfully consider our service and sacrifice to God. God sees the heart and He knows the Truth in our every move. May we offer our highest and best to our Great God so deserving of our highest and best.