

Give Him Your Best - Malachi 1:7-14

Introduction: The Butterball Turkey Company set up a hotline to answer consumer questions about preparing holiday turkeys. One woman called to inquire about cooking a turkey that had been in her freezer for 23 years.

The operator told her it might be safe if the freezer had been kept below 0 degrees the entire time. But the operator warned the woman that, even if it were safe, the flavor had probably deteriorated, and she wouldn't recommend eating it.

The caller replied, *"That's what we thought. We'll just give it to the church."* (Sermon Central.com: Andrew Huson)

This morning, we're talking about the quality of giving our best to God. As Christians, our attitude should be as that of King David when a man named Araunah offered to give him his threshing floor and all the oxen and equipment he needed to make sacrifices for the people. David said, in **2 Samuel 24:24 (NIV)** *"No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."*

When we think of what Jesus has done for us, it should become very plain to see that He deserves the very best from us – not the leftovers. To give Him less than the best shouldn't even be an option when we think of how He died and gave Himself as a sacrifice for us.

In our text, the Lord says through the prophet Malachi that the people had given the Lord less than their best. In fact, it was far from their best. Malachi speaks to the kind of offerings they were giving to God. First theirs were:

1. Defiled Offerings. (7)

Malachi is speaking of the animal sacrifices offered to God on the Brazen Altar. He says, *"You place defiled food on My altar."* The word defiled means, *"to soil, desecrate, or pollute."* Malachi was saying, *"You're offering sacrifices to God that are tainted and polluted."* There were 2 aspects of this defilement First:

A. Outward Defilement. For one thing, the priests were offering sacrifices without washing their hands or changing their clothes between offerings. Now, this was mainly a symbolic act, but it was a required act. It demonstrated reverence and a desire to come clean before the Lord. By neglecting these requirements, the priests should have been disqualified from performing their duty because they had defiled themselves and the sacrifices.

What they were saying, in effect was that God's altar didn't deserve that kind of respect. It was just a piece

of furniture and the job itself was menial and unimportant. They were just going through the motions, so to speak, and doing it haphazardly.

But not only were the priests defiling themselves, according to vs. 8, they were offering defiled animals. God strictly forbade any sacrifice that was defective, sick, or lame. Duet. 15:21 (NIV says, *"If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the Lord your God."*)

So not only were they defiling themselves, they were offering defiled sacrifices. They were offering what God had condemned and offering it in a way God had forbidden. How could this happen? That brings up the second aspect of defilement. There was also an:

B. Inward Defilement. There is an old saying among salesmen: *"Whatever is in the warehouse, will be seen in the showroom."* These outwardly defiled actions were the result of the inward defiled attitudes of the priests. Solomon said in **Proverbs 23:7 (NASB)** *"For as he thinks within himself, so is he"* (NASB). The same thought is found in **Matthew 15:18 (NIV)** *"But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'"*

When we are not right on the inside, eventually it will show up on the outside. By the same token, when we are right on the inside it will show on the outside.

In vs. 7 the priests asked, *"How have we defiled you?"* In other words, *"We don't see anything wrong with the way we worship."* But God saw plenty wrong with it. He was offended by their lack of respect. He was repulsed by their blemished sacrifices. He was appalled at how shallow and insensitive they had become on the inside.

God answered them in vs. 7b: *"By saying that the Lord's table is contemptable."* By their actions, they showed that they didn't respect the Lord's table or the sacrifices. They gave God far less than their best and it revealed just how far their hearts were from God.

Now, lest we think this is just an Old Testament principle, think again! In **Romans 12:1 (NIV)** Paul says, that as Christians, we are to *"offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."* But many times, we're guilty of offering God sacrifices that are full of holes instead of a holy sacrifice.

When is your sacrifice full of holes? When you attend Church out of convenience instead of priority. When you drop your leftovers instead of your firstfruits in the offering plate. When you read your Bible only if you've got nothing better to do instead of making it your daily bread. When you take a position in church only

“if you can’t find anyone else.” When you give the church a 23 year old turkey. We defile God’s holy altar all the time when we don’t do our best; when we don’t give our best; and when we don’t live our best.

We say, *“I would get involved if I had time.”* The reality is, we’ve all got the same amount of time. It’s not an issue of time, it’s an issue of priority in the heart. And God looks on the heart. What we do with our time tells on the heart. The priests were not giving their best because their hearts were not right with God. Next, let’s look at the:

2. Denied Offerings. (8)

These offerings that were defiled to the Lord were denied by the Lord. Malachi challenges them with two illustrations to show that the Lord wouldn’t accept such offerings. First:

A. A Displeasing Presentation. In vs. 8, Malachi compares the giving of a defiled offering to God with giving a similar offering to the governor of the land. If the governor would not accept such an offering then why did they think God would be pleased with it?

Think about the kind offerings we bring to the Lord. In our giving of our time and effort, do you think your employer would be pleased with if you just halfway did your job, or if you showed up part of the time or only came to work when you felt like it? How long would you last at that job?

Why do we think that God feels any different and deserves anything less than our best? Listen, God gave us His best in giving us His only begotten Son. And certainly Jesus gave us His best as He gave His very life for our sins. And He did it because He loves us, and does not want to spend eternity without us. The very least we owe Him is our best. God deserves our best because He gave us His best. But also notice:

B. A Discarded Prayer. **Malachi 1:9 (NIV)** says, *“Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”--says the LORD Almighty.* Again the answer is obvious. Why do we think that we can do anything we want and live anyway we please and think that God is going to overlook it all and bless us as if nothing was wrong and everything was right?

Notice **Malachi 1:10 (NIV)** *“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.”* As far as God was concerned it would be better that the doors of the Temple were shut and the whole sacrificial system stopped than offer such as they had been offering. They were giving, but they were not giving their best. God said this would not do. He deserved the best and accepted nothing but the best.

God will not accept our offerings to Him if they are not our best. Whether it’s a half-prepared sermon, or

Sunday School lesson, a choir special that hasn't been rehearsed, a position that is not fulfilled and done properly, a ministry that is not been carried out, or an offering that's given out of the leftovers, it will not be acceptable to God. He deserves only our best.

So there are the defied offerings to the Lord which are denied offerings by the Lord! So, what is left to discuss are the:

3. Deserved Offerings. (11)

Malachi 1:11 (NIV) *“My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.*”

Here Malachi reaches into the future when God's name will be praised and worshipped through out the earth. In that day, He will only be offered only that which is pure because that is what He deserved.

How many of you love to sing, *“How great Thou Art?”* That is a great hymn because it declares the greatness of God. Well, if we think He's great, then we will want to give Him His due. He deserves only the best. But it's not enough to simply bring Him lip service. As the saying goes, *“Don't just sing it, bring it!”*

As we said earlier, that was David's attitude when he insisted on buying the threshing floor from Araunah. His God was great, and if he couldn't honor His greatness with a sacrifice that cost him something, then he wouldn't offer it at all.

But it seems today, that all people want to do is try to get something for nothing and give nothing for something. But as Malachi points out, that won't work in God's economy. He deserves the best and if it costs us something, then the sacrifice is worth it.

Conclusion: Let me close with this thought. When you became a Christian, you made a vow to God. When you ask Him in your heart, you said to Him, *“God, I don't deserve this eternal life you're willing to give me, but I'm asking you for it. I'm asking you to forgive me and make me fit for your heaven. And in exchange, I give you my heart and my life. I give you my past, my present, and my future. I promise to serve you and love you and do my very best to live for you all the days of my life.”* And if you're not a Christian, let me say that you can't even begin to give your best until you've given Christ your life.

So the question is, have you kept those vows? Have you done your best? God's kept His end of the deal, have you?