

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 26TH, 2021 // PRAYER & COMMUNION

DESPISING THE TABLE (MALACHI 1:6-13A)

God had done so much for His people Israel throughout their history as a nation- yet how did they respond to God's love?

- The priests and the people alike were “despising” the name of the God who loved and saved them by despising the table (vs. 7b).
- God's people were supposed to be like His children, yet they weren't honoring Him as a Father (vs. 6a). His people were called to be His servants, yet they showed no respect for Him as their master (vs. 6a).

- The corruption happening with the priests in Malachi's day was that they were offering defiled sacrifices on the altar (vs. 7-14).
- The people of God, with the endorsement & help of the priests, were bringing God less than their very best to the altar of worship.

What does it say about us as professing Christians when we spend thousands of dollars and dozens of hours of our time on entertainment, gifts for ourselves & family...

- ...and yet we can't even give more than a dollar of our money or an hour of week to God's work?
- Our offerings to God are an indication of what's in our hearts, because “where your treasure is, there will be your heart also” (Matt. 6:21).

The worship and offerings of the people of God were so half-hearted, so lethargic, and so apathetic that God even says, “I wish you'd just stop coming to church” (vs. 10).

- God wasn't pleased with their cheap, half-hearted expressions of worship that were devoid of real, genuine devotion.
- The sacrifices and offerings that God truly wants are ones that flow out of a humble, broken spirit (Ps. 51:17) and a life of obedience (1 Sam. 5:22).

God's worship will be given to Him in spite of complacency on the part of His people.

- The day will come when all of the earth will worship God and magnify His great name (vs. 11).
- Malachi looked ahead to a time when the message of God's salvation would be taken to all nations.
- Israel was called to be a “light to the nations” (Isa. 42:6) and God's call to His Church involves taking the gospel to all nations (Mark 16:15).

Instead of joyfully worshipping God and displaying His glory to the nations, the priests and the people of God were bringing God leftovers and then complaining that serving and worshipping God was a burden and a weariness (vs. 13).

- The people of God had lost their sense of reverence, respect, and honor for the holiness of God- and that was displayed in their attitude towards worship.

It can become very easy for any us to “go through the motions” with any act of worship and lose the significance of it.

- What does it say about our hearts when we see the worship of God as a wearisome burden that we don't bring our best to?
- The call of God's Word is for us to fear the Lord, remember His commands, and worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

SYMBOLS IN WORSHIP

God required sacrifices of worship from His people not because He got hungry and needed bulls, goats, or animals (Psalm 50:9-13).

- God required this worship from His people to symbolize some very important spiritual realities-
 - Sin brings death (Romans 6:23)
 - There must be payment for sin (Hebrew 9:22).
 - God has love and provision for His people in providing them a substitute (Leviticus 16:21-22).

God's desire for His people was for them to be fully engaged in these acts of worship - understanding the deeper spiritual realities to which all of it pointed.

- What God wanted was their hearts, and anything we give our attention, affection, time, and money towards reveals what has our hearts.
- These OT symbols of worship were incomplete - they served to remind the people of their need for atonement and pointed ahead to the coming Messiah.
- **Hebrews 10:3-4**

God, as the perfect judge, rightly requires payment/restitution for sin against His perfect law.

- God, as a forgiving and merciful Father, provides a way of salvation for His people.
- The entire story of the Bible, from the Garden of Eden to the history of Israel to the prophets/priests of God, points to the cross where Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, laid down His own life in our place as a sacrifice for our sins.

As New Testament Christians living in right relationship with God because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice in our place, our worship takes on a new and deeper meaning.

- God's desire for us to be fully engaged in acts of worship because we're to understand the deeper spiritual realities to which all of it points.
- The ordinance of communion (or the Lord's Supper) is deeply meaningful, symbolic and points entirely to Jesus.

THE LORD'S SUPPER (1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-33)

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

- Paul is writing words of correction to the church in the city of Corinth because they, just like God's people in Malachi, were, “despising the Church of God” (vs. 22).
- In the early church, Christians would celebrate the Lord's Supper with great banquets they called, “Love Feasts” (1st century potlucks).

These “love feasts” were to be times of fellowship, community, and friendship and would climax in observance of the Lord's Supper.

- But in Corinth, they weren't truly fellowshiping because there were so many divisions in this church (vs. 19-20).
- As the Corinthians ate, each of them would, “go ahead with his own meal” (vs. 21a) without considering others they were eating with.

On top of all of that, in their meals, the Corinthians showed favoritism- some people had plenty to eat and drank so much wine they got drunk, while others went hungry (vs. 21b).

- Paul is understandably frustrated with this church!
- What follows is His instruction on how we are as believers to observe the Lord's Supper in a way that honors God and helps us remember what it's all about.

1. REMEMBER THE SIGNIFICANCE (VS. 24-26)

The bread we take symbolizes the broken body of Jesus, and the wine symbolizes the blood of Jesus.

- As often as we take the bread and wine, we're to do it in, “remembrance” of Jesus' sacrifice.
- If it becomes a ritual that we take without truly practicing “remembrance,” we're completely missing the point.

What are we to remember?

- Remember Jesus Himself- His love, protection, provision, and ongoing grace for us.
- Remember Jesus's substitutionary sacrifice for us (vs. 23-25).
- Remember His forgiveness through the new covenant (vs. 25b).
- Remember that Jesus is coming again (vs. 26).

2. TAKE COMMUNION WITH LOVE FOR OTHERS (VS. 17, 22, 33-34)

Paul tells this church that when they come to the table with unreconciled division with other believers, they're not truly taking the Lord's Supper (vs. 20).

- The Church is called the body of Christ! If we're all sharing the body of Christ together in communion, but we're divided, we're contradicting the reality of the one body of Christ.
- If there's any judgmentalism, unforgiveness, resentment, or bitterness, we must repent (Matthew 5:23-24).

3. EXAMINE YOURSELF (VS. 27-34)

Because of the relationally unloving, irreverent, and self-centered manner this church was coming to the Lord's table, God's divine discipline was taking place.

- Many of them were suffering sickness and even death because of this lack of respect and reverence towards the Lord (vs. 30).
- God still disciplines His children! (Heb. 12:6)

If we come to the table in an “unworthy manner” we will be “guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord” (vs. 27).

- When Jesus was crucified, the guilty parties responsible for nailing Him to the cross stood by indifferent, laughing and pursuing pleasure as He bled to death (John 19:23-24).
- This is what we do when we disrespect communion through taking it carelessly.

Before we take it, we must “examine ourselves” (vs. 28) - we must take a private mental and spiritual inventory of our lives.

- Am I truly trusting in Christ for salvation? Is there any unconfessed or unrepented sin?
- Am I at odds with any believer or am I holding onto resentment or unforgiveness towards anyone?
- Is there anything I should be doing that I'm refusing to?
- **Samuel & Saul (1 Samuel 15:22)**

“TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE”

- Sometimes we think that the “sacrifice” God wants from us most is simply a religious act (baptism, church attendance, tithing/giving, communion, Bible reading, prayer, etc.).
- What God wants from us is obedience to His most important command- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Matthew 22:37).
- What has your heart has your attention.
- What God wants from us in worship is our attention, love, and our hearts fully engaged in the practices He's given us that point to incredible spiritual realities.
- What does it say about our hearts when we see the worship of God as a wearisome burden that we don't bring our best to?
- Does He have your heart?

THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. Remember the Significance
2. Take this with Love for Others
3. Examine Yourself.