

## Malachi on Bringing Your Best to God

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I have a story I want to begin with. It's a legend. About 1,000 years ago, it is the legend of the King of Siam. Do you all know where Siam is, in southeast Asia. Now, when you approach a king and you displease a king, how does a king usually react? Sometimes he can put you in prison, right? Or even worse death. But this king he was a wily king and he knew another way to deal with his enemies. And what he would do is he would provide his enemy with a fantastic gift, an albino elephant. Now, in that time period this was so rare that it was considered a great honor, and a great height in social status if you got an albino elephant. The problem is this: elephants eat a lot. And they are very expensive to maintain. And by the time the person was done with their gift they were literally financially bankrupt. And that's how he would deal with his enemies.

And that is the legend behind something that we are all very familiar with today, the white elephant gift. How many of you've been to a white elephant gift party? So, you know what I'm talking about right. You know these gifts aren't really the best type of gifts, right? They are more like the flea market type of gifts. I remember one year my wife and I got a tea set that looked like a cabbage. You took the top off and then a cabbage opened up. I don't know what happened to it, but it disappeared quickly after we got home.

How about you? Audience participation time. What kind of gifts did you get at white elephant parties? Anything interesting? A dremel kit. I don't even know what that is. Strange earrings. Anybody else? Nuns having fun. I didn't know nuns had fun. Okay. Anybody else? Well, I made a list of the top gifts that you find at white elephant gift parties. Books of poems about cats. Do you all remember the screaming goat? Yes, the screaming goat. A people of Walmart calendar. Those ugly Christmas sweaters. Pre-worn shoes. Bit coin gift card. And my favorite headbands to hold up your mullet from the 80's.

Now, you all now that these white elephant parties can be a lot of fun, as long as the receiver of these gifts isn't an actual birthday boy or your wife, right? You don't want to give them that kind of gift. You don't want Great Aunt Betty's pig shaped soup bowl to give to your wife, because what happens if you gave her something like that? You'd end up in the doghouse right?

Well, I am going to tell you a story from the Bible about a people who treated God as if He was only worthy of getting white elephant gifts. Matter of fact they treated their Heavenly Father as He was receiving second and even third hand gifts. Can you believe that? And it is found in the book of Malachi. So, what I would like to do is I loved the Minor Prophets so much I actually wrote a book about the Minor Prophets and their faith. I co-wrote it with a pastor friend of mine. And we introduced each chapter with just a little story to connect you with the Minor Prophets, because the Minor Prophets don't have a lot of narrative that goes along with their stories. So, let me introduce you to Malachi. And while you are looking there for Malachi, I'll give you extra time to go look for him. But let me read you the story of Malachi.

"Well, that's some animal you've got there," he said. Malachi's comment hung in the air as he gazed at the emaciated brown bull lazily chewing its cud. The slack rope held the creature that showed no intention of moving anytime soon. The man holding the other end of the woven cord reached up to scratch his own nose, weighing a response.

"Yeah," he finally said. "And you care because...?"

Well, Malachi shuffled his feet and glanced around. The line of Jews waiting for their turn at the Temple was backed up at least fifty feet. Families were patiently standing with their offerings and sacrifices, waiting their turn, brushing off flies and making small talk in the shade. No one seemed to be paying attention to this conversation, but Malachi suspected that would change soon.

He absent-mindedly kicked a loose stone in the street that skittered next to the bull's obviously lame right hoof. "Well, I was just noticing that... um... well, the thing is," Malachi stammered, "that... OK. I'll just say it. Your bull looks terrible. And it shouldn't. I mean, you shouldn't be here with it if it's blemished."

The afternoon shadows made the man's scowl even more pronounced. He tensed up a little, then seemed to pause and reconsider. Rather than make a move to intimidate the slight man in front of him, he simply adjusted his robes and then gestured to the others in line. "You think mine's any worse than theirs?"

Waiting to respond, Malachi's eyes moved down the line, taking in the various and sundry livestock. Goats with broken horns, lambs with obvious eye infections, rams with patchy hair. The man had a point; the bull wasn't unusual.

Bleating and lowing mingled with the sound of conversations and a bit of laughter as the line shuffled forward a few steps, one family closer to the altar. The man he had confronted took Malachi's silence as a sign that his point hit home, and he pressed the advantage. "Look, friend, it is bad enough that I have to give up the bull at all. Livestock ain't exactly a booming industry right now. The herd at home is small, and times are tough. I know I've got a better bull at my house, but... I mean, I could sacrifice that one, but then what? It's money out of my pocket. My neighbor just made an offer to buy him... for DOUBLE what they'd pay for this loser here. No one wants this one, and since it's all getting burned up anyway... ya know?"

This was it. Malachi knew it. He knew that this was just the right opportunity to share. He wasn't being silent out of weakness; but he was mulling over the words from the Lord he knew he must speak. The man's casual indifference to the Law was like a magnet drawing the words out of him. Despite his disdain for public speaking, words poured forth.

"Listen, guys," he called out. No longer conversing just with the sickly bull's owner, Malachi's voice carried down the line and caught the attention of everyone waiting. His voiced cracked as he continued emphatically. "God spoke to me the other day, and here's what He says to tell you. 'Children honor their parents, and servants honor their masters. I am your Father—why don't you honor Me? I am your Master—why don't you respect me? You despise Me!'"

Malachi paused, waiting for a penitent response or laments from the crowd as they immediately saw the error of their ways. He hopefully searched for the signs of remorse on the people's faces, but instead

saw blank stares turn to smirks and ridicule. Laughter started to trickle towards him, and a few goats punctuated the air with cries that suddenly sounded mocking. Men gestured toward him, and the crowd seemed more surprised that he had broken Temple etiquette by shouting at them than struck by the seriousness of the accusation he had made.

The man with the bull looked around for backup and received it quickly from the next family in line. A burly husband shifted his malnourished lamb to his wife's arms and stepped closer to the anxious Malachi.

"Hey, pal... we're all standin' here givin' up our time to kill off a perfectly good animal. It's for God, you moron. The priests ain't turnin' us down. How have we 'despised' the Lord if we're in line to sacrifice to Him?" Heads nodded in agreement, daring Malachi to argue.

Looking up and down the line, seeing their ridicule and disdain for the words he spoke, Malachi's optimism quickly faded. Feeling the weight of their questions, the prophet suddenly realized one thing: this was going to be harder than he thought!

And that is a historical fiction of what we will be reading in the book of Malachi. I hope you found it. Most people know Malachi only because they go to Matthew and they go a few pages too early and they hit Malachi. It is the last of the 39 Old Testament books. And Malachi we don't know too much about him other than his name means, my messenger. He was God's messenger to the people of about 400 BC.

One day the Prophet Malachi was standing outside the Temple, his mouth agape, he was watching with incredulity as the priests readily accepted one sorry excuse of a sacrifice to God after another. Now remember in the Old Testament Mosaic Law was created because Jesus Christ hadn't come yet; the ultimate sacrifice for Mankind's sin had yet to come. So, God created a sacrificial system where three times a year the people would bring an animal offering to the Temple and they would sacrifice it. And that animal would take the punishment of their sins. The animal's blood covered their sins for a temporary time period, until the true Messiah came down; whom we know as Jesus Christ.

But, God gave some requirements for it. For one it had to be an actual sacrifice, you had to sacrifice something. In other words, it was the best of your animals in your flock. And when you are in an agrarian society your animals are your income. Now, these animals too, had to be perfect and without blemish, nothing broken, no infections. No bulls so old that they are about to drop dead before the altar. None that are stolen. I mean these are requirements because those sacrifices look forward to the day when the Ultimate sacrifice would come, perfect and holy. These animals symbolized Jesus Christ, the ultimate sacrifice.

But these worshippers didn't care what they were bringing to the Lord. They were bringing God white elephant gifts. And Malachi the prophet knew he had to address it. Now, what I love about the book of Malachi is that God's personality really beams through Malachi, especially his emotionalism. A lot of times we believe that God is kind of up there, and He is above that and He doesn't have emotions. But when read through Malachi we read the pain that the Lord feels. For instance, go to verse 1 of chapter 1. "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi." This was a burden for God. This was something that was on His heart that was weighing Him down. A relationship that was broke with His people that He wanted to fix.

And He did this through what is called seven literary disputations. Can you say that literary disputations? And you are like what am I saying? I have no idea what that is. It is kind of like this, it is like a court case where you know the person is guilty. Let's say you are walking around the house and your tween is behind the house and they are vaping. And you go up to them and say, "Are you vaping?" And they put it behind their back, and there is smoke pouring up and they are turning kind of green, and they say, "No, we're not vaping."

And that is what a disputation is, you know the party is guilty, and the guilty party knows they are guilty, but they are going to argue against their guilt and try to say they have done nothing wrong. So, God will bring an accusation against the people, and the people will challenge it, and God will answer. And through this we will get an insight into God's big heart.

Now, the foundation of this entire book of God's entire argument is found in chapter 1:2 where God says, "I have loved you." That's the foundation for this whole book: God loves His chosen people. He loves them passionately. And this is what they say in response "In what way have You loved us?" God answers in verse 3: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the Lord. "Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness."

Now, you've got to remember that the Israelites were God's people of promise. He went all the way back to Father Abraham and through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who He named Israel that He was going to bring the promises of salvation to the world. Matter of fact God changed the name Jacob to Israel, and Israel had a brother named Esau. And what God says, "I showed you favor through your father Jacob; and Esau he was constantly at war with you." Matter of fact through the 100's of years of Israel's history Esau's descendent, the Edomites were constantly betraying the Israelites to the enemies. And God says, "I have protected you from these people. And I have taken you out of slavery. And I have given you a Promise Land. And I have given you bounty and success over your enemies. I have given you the Word of God. I have sent you the prophets. And I am going to give the Messiah which the Gospel will got out around the world. How can you not know that I love you?"

But the people responded like this: "That was yesterday. What have you done for me today?" They didn't feel that God was showing them love now. And why? What's the conclusion of this disputation? The people did not believe that God actually loved them, they just didn't think that God loved them despite 100's of years of Him showing the love, they did not believe it.

Second disputation chapter 1, verse 6, God 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." And the priest responds:

"In what way have we despised Your name?" And God answers with four different answers. Verse 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.' 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."

So, here God set up this system, He said in Deuteronomy 28:30, "If you obey me, and you love me, man I'll keep loving you. I will shower you with blessings and all. Just obey me. My laws are meant for your good. They are meant for your healing. They are meant to forgive you of your sins and protect you and give you bounty. But you are saying, "Ah, I'm so sick of doing this." Now, bear in mind that in this part,

this disputation is that God is addressing the priest. And that would be very similar if Pastor Glenn got up here and said, "Well, I didn't bother writing a sermon this week. Well, whatever. Why don't we read *Moby Dick* instead?" Or Brett came up here and said, "I didn't practice. I'm just going to do *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*, and we'll be done." I mean they just care. And the priest they just gave up caring. They didn't care if the people brought in bad sacrifices. It was their job to be intermediaries between the people and God and they were falling down on their job.

Matter of fact he says, "Hey if the governor came in?" What if Governor Abbott came in here? We'd give him a special seat. We would give him a lot of attention. We would probably take him out for a good meal afterwards or something. But here's the God of the universe who created them, and they are giving Him white elephant gifts.

The second in verse 11 He says, "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.'" The very job that the priests had to bring the people to God, they were saying this is contemptible, we don't like doing this. Now, bear in mind that with the Israelites the Levites were the people who were responsible for taking care of the spiritual needs of Israel. They needed the food and the money to come into the Temple because they had no land and no other jobs. So, what they are basically saying is, "We hate our job! We rather be doing anything but doing this." And in doing so they profane the name of God, not just to the Jewish people but to the whole world who looked to the Jewish people to know the true God, Yahweh.

Verse 13, the third answer: "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?" They are saying, "Our job is weary. We are sick of doing this for God.

The fourth answer, 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 nation." Verse 7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 8 But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," Says the Lord of hosts.

So, here we've got God responding by pointing out the obvious, the sacrificial animals were appalling! They were blind. They were lame. They were even stolen! People were stealing animals to sacrifice. And the guardians of God's grace that covered the people's sins were shaming God by their sacrifice.

So, why were the priest acting this way? Because they did not believe that God was worthy of the sacrifice. They just did not believe that God was worthy of the sacrifice.

Alright, let's look at the third disputation, chapter 2:10, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? 11 Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the Lord's holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god."

Now, God saw the relationship between Israel and Himself as a covenant relationship, almost like they were married. They were to be loyal to each other. God was ever faithful to Israel, but Israel was ever

chasing after idols. He was saying, "You are not coming to Me. You guys are chasing the fake gods of our land. You are chasing your own self, humanism." He said, "You broke another vow."

In verse 13, "And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, With weeping and crying; So, He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. 14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness, Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion, And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 16 "For the Lord God of Israel says, That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore, take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

So, God wanted a people who were faithful; faithful to Him and their covenant, and faithful to their spouse. At this time period divorce rates went skyrocketing, and the people were dealing treacherously with their spouses. And God says, "I don't want you to divorce. I hold this covenant of marriage as a very sacred covenant." And why? Because we want godly offspring, a family best creates godly offspring. And if you don't, and you get divorce there is terrible feelings, and violence and anger, and it breaks the family, and it breaks the unity of the people up. And God says, "You are all unfaithful towards me, and you are all unfaithful to each other." And why were these people unfaithful to each other and God? Because the people didn't believe they had to be faithful. They thought they could go to their version of church and still live in sin. The people folks were faithless.

The fourth disputation verse 17, chapter 2, and this is where you can really hear God's heart starting to break. "You have wearied the Lord with your words; and yet you say, 'In what way have we wearied Him?' In that you say, 'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,' Or, 'Where is the God of justice?'"

In other words, they are saying, "Hey our enemies are out there acting in whatever way they want, doing all kinds of evil, and here we have to be good and do the right thing. But you don't punish them! Why can't we just be like them. We want to be like them." And this is where we get this problem of evil that we even have today. Matter of fact you will find that most people will turn down God because they'll say, "Hey, do you see all the evil in the world? Where is God in all of this? I should just act like them if He is not going to deal with evil."

But God says this in chapter 3:3, "And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple..." Verse 5, "And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me," says the Lord of hosts."

Now, in the Bible when it talks about fear it doesn't mean actually being terrified of God, although there is an element to that, it is mix of reverence for who God is, and obedience, to obey Him. In other words, He is saying, "Not only do you not fear me, but you don't revere my position, and you don't obey the good commandments that I gave you." He says, "You think that I'm not dealing with evil, I am, but I'm seeing the big picture." And He promises here, He makes a prophecy that the Messiah, His Son Jesus Christ will be coming. And He will die for the sins of the world. And then He will return to bring judgment upon the world. And then when all evil is put down we will enter into the Millennial Kingdom an Eternal

State and everything will be pure. Justice will come. But the people wanted justice at that second, and God says, "No, I'm working on the big picture here. The long plan. And I am dealing with justice. You cannot accuse Me of not dealing with evil. I am dealing with evil."

But this is the problem that the people had; they just did not believe that God was just. They didn't think that He was fair because they didn't get to live as their enemies lived.

The fifth disputation verse 3:7 and the Lord's heart is actually breaking here. He says, "Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'

Well, He had just answered that, as if the people didn't know. He says follow My ordinances, follow my laws, just obey Me, that is all I am asking. As a parent that is all you ask your kids, "Just please obey me." Now, some of you probably had kids and they can be tiresome, and they don't always obey, and it is a little wearisome as a parent. Mine are all about to graduate from High School and be gone, whew. Thank goodness. And it was a fight, it is a battle to be a parents isn't it? Every day to get your kid, it is like herding cats. And God is the same way here, He says, "All I ask from you is to keep your end of the covenant; just obey my good and moral laws that will keep you well." And they are like, "No. No, I'm not going to do it. I'm just going to do my own thing." And why? Why? Because the people did not believe that God was worth reconciling with. They didn't think it was worth building that relationship.

The sixth disputation, God says verse 8, "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?'" You can almost see the people taking their broken down animals, and they are sick, and they are kind of shoving them behind their back. And they are like, "In what way have we robbed you?" You know it is so obvious that they are at fault here. And God just says it plainly, "In tithes and offerings." Verse 10, He makes this fantastic proposal to the people. If anybody knows the book of Malachi it is probably this verse Malachi 3:10, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

In other words, God says you are only bringing as Pastor Glenn taught us in the last few weeks, at the most a quarter, 23% as your income goes. And God doesn't even need it, it goes to the priest and the Levites to take care of them and their needs. God says, "Hey, you be faithful and I'm going to bless you so much that your storehouses will overflow." Matter of fact in the following verse it says, "The people of the nations will say, 'Wow, look at Israel! They got it going. God is blessing them.'" And all they had to do is take that little step of faith that God has asked them to do.

But the people's hearts were stingy, and they just did not trust that God was going to follow through with His promise. They wanted to hold that little bit that they had, rather than trust that God would multiply it.

The seventh and the last disputation is this, chapter 3:13, and it is the saddest one of all, "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the Lord. Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'" Verse 14, "You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts?'

They finally just admit it. They are like, you know what, it is useless to follow You. Why are we doing this? It is an embarrassing display of ignorance on the part of the Jews. They show just how little insight they truly have into the reality of the world around. Their terrible situation being mired in sin, and God's love to cover over their sins, and bring them to Him. And instead of taking the responsibility for their own sins, they blame God for it. They blame God. And the real crux of this whole argument, the real reason for all this behavior is this: the people just didn't love God. They didn't. God loved them, but they didn't love Him in return. And that is truly tragic.

Now, you would hope that Malachi's message to the people would have turned some heads, and make some people repent. And make them think, "You know God really does love me." Maybe I need to step up my relationship with Him.

And what was the response of God? The people did not turn back. They did not repent. And for 400 years! God had nothing more to do with the Jewish people. There was not a prophet, not a Bible verse, not a message, nothing. What is 400 years? This year is the celebration here in the United States of America of when the pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. Look at how much time has changed from the Plymouth Rock to now. 400 years is a long time! And for 400 years God was like alright, you don't love me, and you want to be on your own. And the Jewish people were beat up by one country, after another, after another, until the Romans finally conquered them and put them under terrible oppression because they did not trust God or love Him.

Now, if that was it that would be a pretty hopeless message, right? You are like, oh, is it almost time to go? No, there is hope here. Because you know what? God always keeps a believing remnant of people who want to have a relationship with Him.

And this is what he promises in 3:15, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. 17 "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

So, what He is talking about here, and we don't have time to get into chapter 4, but chapter 4 Malachi goes from what most people believe prophets are is they tell the future. But a lot of the prophets they would do what is called forthtelling, they would look at the problems and the sins of the world and call them out and call the people to repentance. But in chapter 4 Malachi switches to foretelling, he tells about the future and he gives two prophecy. He says one He is going to spare His jewels. Now, do any of you own jewels? Don't raise your hands we don't want people to rob your house. But jewels are valuable, you take care of them right? They are important to you. You don't just throw them on the dashboard of your car and leave. You don't leave them lying around. They are valuable. And do you know that's how God sees you? He calls you His jewels. That means that you are important to Him. You matter to Him. You take care of them. And God spares His jewels. He says, "Hey, there is a time of judgment coming on this world, and I will spare you from that judgment. From the judgement of going to Hell, that you may be in my care for ever and ever."

And he ends this with the last prophecy. God wouldn't talk to the unbelieving remnant for 400 years, but you will know that God is back in the picture when? John the Baptist comes to tell about the

Messiah. To proclaim the Messiah. That is the difference that is coming. So, amazing isn't it? That God always keeps a remnant of those who love Him.

And folks, if you are sitting here in the church then likely you are the remnant too. And I have three questions for you that I want to close with. And the first question is this: Do you believe that God loves you? You know at times when I get down I have come to write a list or do it in my mind of ten things that day that I can be thankful for the Lord for. And it amazes me how often I can so easily fill that ten and keep going. We kind of get stuck in our own little world, like the Israelites did, and we forget that God has poured out His blessing on us in so many ways. Ultimately by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. And when we put our faith and trust in Him we will be saved from our sins. We become the Lord's jewels. We enter that covenant relationship with Him. And we will live with God forever after we are dead. So, look in your heart and ask do you believe that God loves you? Oh, yeah, He loves you. He was willing to sacrifice His Son for you.

Second questions: Do you love God in return, or are you just going through the motions. You want to know the difference between Christianity and religion? Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Religion is just man doing something. Going through the motions. Being like the Israelites, just feeling they just have to do something and doing it half-heartedly. That's not loving God in return is it? That would be like my wife's birthday part and I crawl in the dumpster and I look for a piece of half-eaten birthday cake and I hand it to her. That is what religion is, it is giving our eh, to God as much as we can, and expect then He is going to reciprocate. But that's not how it works does it?

Third question: If you truly love God, if you are saved then you are in the covenant relationship with God right now, are you giving your best to God, or are you giving God white elephant gifts? What does it mean to give your best to God? How about your time. How are you using your time? Are you using it to glorify God, to exalt His Name? Are you using your talents? God has built each of us with skills and abilities that we can use to serve Him. What about your money? Are you using it in ways that glorify the Lord? Are you spending it on things that waste time? That pollute your mind and separate you from God?

So, there are two groups of people in the book of Malachi, those who were just doing religion and those who are in relationship with God. If you are in the just religion part, boy that is sad isn't it, that is a terrible relationship to have. You are missing out on everything. The great joys, the bounty, and the adventure it is to know Jesus as your Savior. So, if you haven't accepted Jesus yet, don't leave this place today without praying from your heart something like, "Dear Jesus, please forgive me of my sins and be my Lord and Savior." Jesus will do that. Your sins will be forgiven. The guilt will be washed away, and you will inherit eternal life with Him, one of the jewels for ever and ever.

Now, if you are a Christian, you have accepted Jesus Christ maybe your relationship needs a little working on with the Lord. Maybe you are just bringing the white elephant gifts. Maybe you have fallen in a rut. Look for the ways you can praise the Lord for all the things that He has done for you to show you that He loves you. And find a way to reciprocate. Look for ways to volunteer. Look for ways to serve. Look for ways to make this world a better place for Him. And that is what the Lord has called all of us Christians to do. And if you do those things you will enter the relationship with Jesus Christ, which will grow and get better and better. I'm only in my 40's and I look back to my 20's and think, "Man I've gone so far." And yet, we have an eternity to see how far it goes with our great loving God and Creator. Don't pass these opportunities up today.

I'll close in prayer. Lord, I thank you so much for the opportunity to teach from Malachi, Lord, you really opened up your heart in that book. You share your love for us all through it, Your burden as you called it, and how it breaks Your heart to see when we are far from You. Lord, help us not be far from you. If there is anybody here today that does not know you as their Lord and Savior, I pray right now they will give their hearts to you. And for those of us Lord, we are trying to develop that relationship, help us Lord, we are human, we make mistakes, we stumble and fall, pick us up Lord, dust us off and teach us how to grow in that wonderful relationship with you. Thank you, Jesus, so much. We love you in return. And all God's people say, amen.

Thank you.