

Post-Exile Prophets
R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Wednesday, October 1
Reading: Malachi 1:6-8

Malachi 1:6 *"A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a Father, where is the honor due Me? If I am a Master, where is the respect due Me?" says the LORD Almighty.*

In 1967, R&B sensation Aretha Franklin came out with a song titled RESPECT in which a woman pleads with her man for the respect she deserves. This idea pops into my head as I read the opening words of God's indictment of the priests in Malachi's day. They were not showing God the honor He deserved.

God had often called Israel "My son."

"Israel is My firstborn son..." (Exodus 4:22)

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1)

"...because I am Israel's Father, and Ephraim is My firstborn son" (Jeremiah 31:9)

"My servant" was also a popular name for Israel in the prophets, particularly Isaiah. The word translated "honor" is the Hebrew word for honor, glory, and majesty. If God was truly their Father, why did the priests not give Him the glory He deserved? The word translated "respect" is the Hebrew word for fear or reverence. If God was their Master, why did they not stand in awe as they served Him? They were to show the people how to live for God and what true worship looked like. And they had failed miserably. Instead of honor and respect, they showed contempt.

The priests responded to God's rebuke with a defiant, "How have we shown contempt for Your name?" They didn't see anything wrong with their actions! Instead of the spotless lamb that God required as a sacrifice, they were offering, blind, lame, and diseased animals on God's altar. The Lord challenges them to offer this kind of gift to their Persian governor! They would not imagine giving a defective gift to him for fear of retaliation. And yet they were happy to offer these contemptible offerings to the Lord of the Universe! The words of the prophet Isaiah centuries before still hold true:

The Lord says: "These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is based on merely human rules they have been taught. (Isaiah 29:13; also Mark 6:6-7).

We dishonor the Lord when we fail to give Him the reverence and awe He deserves. We dishonor the Lord when we do not live like the children of God we claim to be. We dishonor the Lord when we live for ourselves and not to bring glory and honor to Him. We dishonor the Lord when we doubt His love and fail to obey and serve Him.

Is there anything in your life that is dishonoring to the Lord? What kind of gifts are you offering to God? Do you give Him your best or your leftovers? Has your heart drifted so far from God that you don't recognize the contempt you are showing to His name?