**Malachi 1 – April 14**

We’ve reached the final book of the Old Testament together! Congratulations on hanging in and presumably growing in your knowledge and maturity along the way as well. Malachi is a book that will have many familiar themes to the Bible student. To be sure, each prophet operates in their own specific time and utilizes their own personality to communicate God’s truth however the opinion and issues of God do not change. In this case, as we pick up in Malachi 1, we come to the realization that God’s people are asking a rather ironic question. In spite of God’s grace, power, mercy, and longsuffering the people want to know if He loves them. In God’s answer, He cites His covenantal faithfulness to them through His electing love of Jacob’s descendants. It is because God loves them that they are still in existence and it is because of God’s faithfulness in the days ahead that they will have a future!

However, the meat of this chapter is found in verse 6 and following as God turns the table. You see, while God’s people wrongly question His love for them in light of His faithful preservation of their heritage, God can rightly call into doubt their affection for Him. He does so by pointing out their lackluster, half-hearted, pseudo-religious exercises which still adhere to the outward appearances of piety while neglecting the heart level desire to worship and glorify God. God provides numerous examples of this kind of transgression. For instance, He declares that the people offer sacrifices that are blemished, lame or sick. Instead of giving their very best to God they skimp by with the worst they have to offer.

As we close today, I want to do so with two ascending thoughts. First, what characterizes your worship? We live in a day when God often gets the “left overs”. That might be our leftover time on Sundays (or during the week) when we don’t have other more pressing “commitments”. It may be our leftover resources, instead of providing the first fruits of our income or possessions to the Father we are often guilty of waiting until all of our obligations are paid. This communicates a lack of faith in God (failing to live in accordance with His wisdom and neglecting to trust in His provision) and, perhaps more importantly, a lack of affection as well.

Second, and more importantly, I want to remind you of the strong contrast between our depraved hearts and God’s good and sacrificial plan. While His people gave their very worst in worship of Him, God gave His very best to redeem His true people. The provision of God is none other than Jesus Christ the true unblemished Lamb of God. This sacrifice came at a great cost and brought the Father much pain while demonstrating His deep and unending love for His people. Among other things, God’s willingness to offer His Son on the altar to atone for our sins should be the very ground of our worship. After all, what else could elicit praise and adoration? What other act can signify God’s commitment to provide for all of our needs?