

WORTHY WORSHIP

Malachi 1:6-2:9

November 4, 2007, Sunday AM

INTRODUCTION

- A. German theologian Karl Barth said, "*Christian worship is the most momentous, the most urgent, the most glorious action that can take place in human life.*"
- B. The minor prophet Malachi, though, said the worship practices of Israel were so repugnant that God wanted someone to close the door so that their worship would cease (1:10).
- C. What about our worship today?
 1. The historic word for worship is "*liturgy*", which literally means the work of the people. Vance Havner tells about a lady visitor who said to the pastor, "*I just love the lethargy in your church!*"
Does this describe our worship?
 2. Perhaps we need a new model for worship. Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, viewed worship as drama in the following way: The congregation are the actors, the preacher and worship leaders are prompters and the audience is God!

Utilizing this model, let's notice three things Malachi says about worthy worship.

I. FIRST, WORTHY WORSHIP FOCUSES ON THE RIGHT PERSON (1:6).

- A. The word worship comes from an Anglo-Saxon word which means "*worth-ship.*" Therefore, at it's simplest, worship can be defined as the ascription of supreme worth to God.
 1. The psalmist admonished the people of his day, "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name*" (Psalm 29:2).
 2. The apostle John had worship in mind when he sang, "*Worthy is the Lamb...to receive...honor, and glory, and blessing*" (Revelation 5:12).
- B. The most common Old Testament word for worship is "*shachah*", which carries the connotation of a reverential attitude toward God combined with adoration.
Exodus 4:31 "*...when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped.*"
- C. The basic New Testament word for worship, "*proskuneo*," means to "*kiss the hand towards one*" or to *prostrate oneself before.*" Again, the idea of honor to God is primary.
- D. This means that everything in our worship experience should be designed to glorify God.
- E. A visiting minister was substituting for the famed pastor Henry Ward Beecher. A large audience has assembled to hear the popular pastor. At the appointed hour, the visiting minister entered the pulpit. Learning that Beecher was not to preach, several began to move toward the doors. The visiting minister stood and called out, "*All who have come here today to worship Henry Ward Beecher may now withdraw from the church! All who have come to worship God, keep your seats!*" (Matthew 4:10)

II. SECOND, WORTHY WORSHIP SUGGESTS THE RIGHT MOTIVE (1:8).

- A. Malachi's point is that worthy worship requires sacrifice of self.
- B. The right motive for worship then is to give and not simply to get.
- C. Lee Truman, writing for Copley News Services, has cogently said: "*If going to church doesn't seem to do anything for you, bear in mind that you go primarily not to get something but to give something. It can only be said as a gross injustice to your religious heritage to think of your church as a spiritual filling station where you tank up on piety to see if you can make it through the next week. Rather it is a place where you go to render homage to God, to praise him, to thank him, and to revere him.*"

III. THIRD, WORTHY WORSHIP RESULTS IN RIGHT ACTIONS (2:9).

- A. We must put handles on the sermon and the service.

1. If worship only leads people simply to think, then our worship may become coldly intellectual.
 2. If worship leads people to only feel emotional about the subject, worship can deteriorate into cheap entertainment-a spiritual sideshow.
 3. When we combine knowledge, feeling, and action, our worship can become life changing.
- B. The late J. Wallace Hamilton wrote about preaching and worship, *“Clarity, poetry, vitality! We must make it clear, we must make it sing, and above all, we must make it live.”*

CONCLUSION

- A. Worthy worship then must...
1. Focus on the right Person - God.
 2. Suggest the right motive – self-sacrifice not self-gratification.
 3. Result in right actions - get off the page and into our lives.
- B. May our prayer be that God would throw open our sanctuary doors and take pleasure in our worship (1:10).