

**THE  
BON  
AIR  
PULPIT**

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Scripture: *Malachi 1:6-14*

Sermon: ***Giving God the Leftovers***

We are walking through the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi. One of the teachings of the Bible is that wise people receive instruction and wise people listen to correction. If you are the running back on the high school football team and you played and your coach got you off to the side and said, here are some ways in which I can help you to be a better running back, it would be a foolish person indeed who would turn and say, well, coach, I already know more about running than you do. Or if you are taking piano and your teacher came to you and said, let me give you some finger exercises that will enable you to play better, you would be foolish indeed to turn and say to your teacher, I already know more about finger exercises than you do. It is the wise person who receives instruction. It is the wise person who listens to correction. Now, when you read the last book of the Old Testament it is a book of correction. God comes and He says here are some things that need to change in your life and of the seven issues that He raises, they all turn and say we already know more than You do. The little phrase that is translated in the English is the word wherein. It is the word oh-yeah. It is a cynical, sarcastic response that when God comes and makes a statement that they already know the answers. They've already know more

things than God knows and so they don't listen. So we are trying to learn from their cynicism and from their sarcasm that we can learn better how to listen to God and how to respond to Him and what He's going to talk to us about today is how we worship. And He's going to talk to us about why we worship and how we worship and what are some wrong ways to worship and what are some better ways to worship so I know that all of us will want to listen as I read from the first chapter of Malachi beginning in Verse 6. A son honors his father, a servant his master. If I am your father, where is the honor due me? If I am your Master, where is the respect due me? says the Lord Almighty. It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name. Now here is their response, But you ask, how do we show contempt for your name? Because you placed defiled food on my altar but you ask, how have we defiled you? By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you bring sacrifice crippled and diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your Governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? Said the Lord Almighty. Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept them? Says the Lord Almighty. Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you, says the Lord Almighty. I will not accept the offerings from your hands. My name will be great among the nations from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offering will be brought to my name because my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord Almighty. But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table it is defiled and of the food it is

contemptible. When you say, what a burden and you sniff at it contemptuously, says the Lord Almighty. When you bring your injured, crippled, diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from you, from your hands, says the Lord. A brother and a sister received a Noah's Ark kit. They put it together and the bathtub was their flood. After the flood was over, they read in the kit that they should make an offering to God because that is what Noah did when he was brought down to dry land. The brother turned to the sister and said, I think we ought to sacrifice one of your animals. The sister said, no, I think **CONTINUE PROOFING HERE** we ought to sacrifice one of your animals. And then the sister had a bright idea. She jumped up, ran up the stairs to the attic and she came back with an old stuffed toy. One of his ears was missing, one of the eyes was missing, the tail was gone, the head was crushed in and she said, let's give this to God, we don't want it anymore anyway. It appeared in a church newsletter, it is called a church blooper. It said it this way - Rummage Sale next Thursday. Bring what you do not want but is too good to just give away - Bring your husband. Our Scripture is about a kind of worship that insults God. God very clearly in the Bible said to the Jewish people, I want you to bring an offering to Me. And the kind of offering it is to be - it is to be the very best you have. You are not to bring to Me anything that you just want to get rid of but you are to bring that to me which represents what you think about Me. It brings to Me the honor that is due to My name. It was the responsibility of the Priest to take every offering, to examine it, to see if it was the very best that it could be. Now what these people began to do was they began to give God the leftovers. They

began to give God what they didn't want, what they didn't need, they just came to God and they just gave Him whatever they will and God looked at them and said, you bring to Me a gift that really expresses what you think about Me - and that is you bring a gift that insults Me. So here are people who come in the presence of God. They come with their second best. With their crippled, with their diseased, with their leftovers. And He turns to them and He says, now I want to talk to you about worship and I want to talk to you about your attitude and I want to talk to you about this bringing gifts to Me that really are just leftovers. And the first thing that He taught us is this. That you need to understand that worship is not a ritual, worship is a relationship. You see, these people could walk out of the temple on Saturday and if the Priest had given them a little sheet of paper that said this, did you go to the temple on Saturday, they could have checked it and said, I feel good, I went to the temple on Saturday. But what He is saying to us is worship is not going to a place. Worship is an encounter with a person. And the question that you need to ask is not did you go to a building. The question is, did you meet God? You see, the purpose of our gathering this morning is not to sing the Doxology, it is not to listen to a sermon. The purpose of our worship is that once we walk out we will know that we have met Him. And that as we meet Him that we find new help and new strength and new hope to be able to live life as we should. It is not a ritual, it is a relationship. It is Christians, He said, let Me tell you who you are going to be. He said, I am going to call you My friends. And friends were

a very special group of people in New Testament times. When you would see a King or a public figure, he would go through all of the official things but behind the throne in a corner there were a close knit of people that when it was all over, the day it ended, he could go back and say, let me talk to you about what has gone on in my life today. Jesus said, let Me tell you who I want you to be. I want you to know what's going on with Me, I want you to know about the Kingdom, and I want to just have a moment on a regular basis where I can just share with you. That you and I want to build a relationship that are the best of friends, the closest of companionships, and that's what we do when we come to worship. We come to say to God, Dear God, I am in your presence, I have the opportunity to know You and to be with You. So we need to say it this way, worship is not something you do, worship is somebody you meet. And if you walk out of this building today and just check attendance but don't check relationships, then what we have done is really insulted his presence. Some of you men, whose wives are at home, you've had a hard day at work and you come home, your wife has fixed a delightful meal and you come in. She says, how was your day? And you say, uh. And she tries to carry on a conversation with you and all she gets is one syllable answers and you sit down and read the newspaper and watch the ball game and go to bed and you do that about 3 months and after a while she turns and says to you, why do you come home? There is no relationship here. I mean, we are in the same place, but there's no relationship here. God turns to us and says, you come to my house but you ignore me when you walk in the door. No relationship here. And he comes and he

says, let me tell you the kind of relationship that really we have. He said, first of all, I am your Father. Would you treat your Father this way? I had a wonderful relationship with my Dad. Dad lived to be 86 years old. When Mom was 79 she died and Dad lived by himself for the next 6 or 7 years. When he was 80 years old, I called him up one day and I said, I'd like for you to fly up to Memphis and I'd like for you to preach at my church. And my Dad flew up from Baton Rouge and stayed in our home for the weekend and that day I asked him to preach and he got up and spoke and I let him - I baptized, he did the Lord's supper. He turned to me and he said, boy, he said, I'm ready to go home now. I said, No, there is one more thing... I took him down to the Fellowship Hall and all the members of our church had brought him a gift. We had actually to go out and buy him another suitcase to put all his little stuff in and everybody brought him a card and some of the ladies had made him a big 80<sup>th</sup> birthday cake and he walked out and everybody sang and it was such a wonderful memory for me to be able to celebrate with him a significant time in his life. Now let me ask you, is that an unusual story? No. Why? Because he's my Dad. What would be unusual for me if I said to you my Dad was 80 years old and I forgot. I never called him. I never sent him a card. I never said I love you. I never said anything for what you have done for me. Then you would say, that's unusual. God turns to us and he says, I am your Father. How can you say I am your Father and yet ignore me. He said, I am like your boss. Let me ask you young salesmen a question. You are trying to go up the ladder. Your super duper big boss flies into Richmond. He turns and he says I am so tired of eating in hotels. Does your wife cook? And you say, boy, she

really can cook. So, the super duper big man walks in. Your wife meets him at the door. She says, you know, I have gotten just so busy. You know how life is. I get so busy. Let's see, come on in here in the kitchen and she opens it up. She says, now let's see, your choice are beanie weenies, and tomato soup. No, you wouldn't do that. Then he said, let me tell you what I am like. I am like a person in authority. And he uses the word Governor. Now, I don't know Governor Gilmore. But if Governor Gilmore called up and said, you know, this is the Secretary of Governor Gilmore, he's trying to visit all the forgotten people of Virginia and he wants to come visit you. Now, let me ask you, if the Governor was coming to your house today, you wouldn't be here this morning. What would you be doing? You'd be home cleaning, straightening, throwing things in drawers. Why? The Governor is coming to see you. Now, let me ask you. What preparation did you make to meet God? So God turns and He says, don't you know who you are in the presence of? But if we just go through a ritual. If we just sit for an hour. If we just sing a little bit and do nothing, the Bible says that is insulting to Him. Don't we understand that worship is coming with a sense of expectancy. I have come to meet God. I mean, if you were going to meet your wife, you hadn't seen her for a week, I mean, how would you come to see her. You've come in the presence of someone with expectancy and hope and openness and surrender in faith and when you walk out you are going to say I met God! Why do we come and bring worship that He says insults me? Don't you know who I am? The second thing that He said is, He said, giving God the leftovers of your life really shuts down all the other relationships of your life. He said, for

example, He said, I can't hear your prayers. He said, why do you treat Me this way and then come and pray to Me? And then He said, it actually would be better to close the doors and not let you in because it really makes it worse. And then He said, I want you to know that My name will be high and lifted up and the implication is this. If you don't do it I will get somebody who will. Do we not understand that we have the most wonderful privilege in the world? But privilege brings accountability. Privilege brings responsibility. And like a little child who doesn't know how to handle privilege it is taken away from them. And if you and I just keep abusing privilege and keep demeaning accountability, then God comes and He says, I will find someone who will. We had a wonderful guest in our church last Sunday. He was from South Korea. He was the head of their international mission department and Mike Lopez introduced me to him and he said after the service, I have some time this week, I'd like to come by and see you. And we had a wonderful conversation this week. For many years, Christians have been sending missionaries to South Korea. The South Koreans have said, God has moved in our lives so much we think we ought to send Missionaries somewhere else. Ten years ago they started their international mission board and in ten years they now have over 250 Koreans who have left their country to go and become missionaries somewhere else. Now, let me ask you. If you wanted to pour out your blessings, would you do it to people who insult you or would you do it to people who desperately want to serve you in gratitude and in love for what you have done. I don't think it

takes a rocket scientist to figure that out. And what begins to happen, if you and I don't come with excitement and with joy then everybody looks around us and they say, Whew! Who wants to be a part of that? I love the old story you will recall years ago a country church caught on fire and what they had to do was to form a bucket brigade and they'd get water out of the pond and they'd pass it to somebody else until finally they would throw it on the building. The preacher was up in the middle of the line and he was passing the buckets. He turned to a fellow he had been trying to get in church for a long, long time and he said, well, first time I ever saw you at church! He said, that's right, Preacher, first time I ever saw your church on fire. Who wants to be a part of that which is drudgery and a burden to us? We come to share the most wonderful good news in the world - that Christ lives, and He can live in your life and He turns and He says but if you don't have that what's gonna happen is that doors of opportunity are going to close for you. Last word. Leftover worship hurts God. Let me ask you, do you think God is a sphinx, do you think God is some computer in the sky? Or do you think God can be hurt? Well, if He can love, He can be hurt. He didn't come home that night. His wife didn't sleep wondering where he was and she got up the next morning and fixed a breakfast like he was in the next room and finally about 7 o'clock he came in the door and she sat down and served him his breakfast and didn't say a word and when he finished eating she turned and said, we have to talk don't we? And he said, yeah. She said, what do you have to tell me? He said, I don't love you anymore. I love somebody else. And she got up, the full weight of that fell on her shoulders and she kinda staggered and threw her arms

back like this to catch herself against the wall. Sunlight of the morning came in and there was on the wall a picture of a cross. I want you to listen to the first Christian sermon. It was delivered by Simon Peter in Jerusalem and he told the story of Christ and then he moved to the crucifixion. Listen to what he did not say. He did not say this what God has done for you. He told us that later. But the first Christian sermon was, this is what you have done for God. And by our insulting Him, by our disobedience to Him, by our turning away from Him, God just said, let me show you what this does and He just split the tree of time open and He said look at the heart of the tree and at the heart of time you see a cross. I came to Christ when I was a Sophomore in college. I came home to tell my Mother and Father who I knew had been praying for me. I always recall sitting in our breakfast room telling my Mother and Father that I had given my life to Christ. In that experience I saw my Mother and Father differently than I had ever seen them before, I recognized that they had been hurt by the kind of life I had lived. And one of my memories is always sitting down with them and saying, Mom and Dad I give you my word I will never try to hurt you again. When I read in the Scripture that when I give God the leftovers of my life, I am hurting Him. When I give my best to others and the leftovers to Him, that I realized that I'm actually wounding Him. And when I think of who He is and what He has done for me, I want to make the same pledge to Him I made to my parents. I don't ever want to hurt You again. Let me ask you. What have you brought this morning? Like the little girl said, that which you didn't want anyway? When the offering comes by in a moment, the plate is going to come in front of you and every time the

plate comes it's kinda judging time, isn't it? I buy a nice house, a nice car, nice clothes, and I come to church and I've got 5 bucks left and... God I'll just give this to you. I want to ask you, how did you come this morning? Did you come to say, Dear God, You are the Lord Almighty? You are my Redeemer and my Savior. I want to give You my best. I don't have much, but I give You my best. Surely, that's what you want to give Him this morning. I would like for you, if you would, just to take a moment between you and God, if you would bow your heads and close your eyes just a moment. Maybe some of us need to have confession time. Some of us need to have recommitment time. Some of you are in the room this morning and say, God has been working in my life and I want to come to give Him my life. I want to give Him my best. Some of you are Christians who need a church family and a church home and you say, God, I want to give You the best of my service and I want to find a place that I can serve You. For most of us it's just a time to say, God, I love You and I make a fresh commitment to You to give You the very best that I have to give.