

Main Idea: In Malachi 1, we see the great God’s assessment to leftover religion. The Lord exposes two indicators that we are giving Him the leftovers in our lives.

- I. Leftover religion cheapens the love of God (1-5).
 - A. When we question God’s love, we tend to feel sorry for ourselves.
 - B. When we question God’s love, we need to reassess why we are hurting.
 - C. When we question God’s love, we need to open our eyes to the evidence we’re missing.
- II. Leftover religion cheapens the worship of God (6-14).
 - A. We cheapen worship when we dishonor God’s name (6).
 - B. We cheapen worship when we defile God’s altar (7-14).
 1. We are in danger when what we give God costs us little.
 2. We are in danger when worship becomes a burden rather than a delight.

Make It Personal: In light of Malachi 1, three resolves are in order.

1. Let’s refuse to settle for leftover religion.
2. Let’s do all we can to make God’s name great among the nations.
3. Let’s remind ourselves that the One who gave His best deserves our best.

This morning we’re beginning a new series, a journey through the book of Malachi. Malachi is called a minor prophet, but that’s due to the brevity of his book (only four chapters, as compared to major prophets like Isaiah with sixty-six chapters and Jeremiah with fifty-two chapters). The minor prophet Malachi offers a major message about the great God and His purpose for the world. More about that later.

I’d like to teach you a theme song for our series which comes from what may be the key verse that sums up the purpose of the book (in my estimation).

Theme Song of Series: “Great Among the Nations (Malachi 1:11)”

My name will be great, great among the nations.

My name will be great, great among the nations.

*From the rising to the setting of the sun, my name will be great,
great among the nations.*

God is great. There is none greater. He calls Himself “the LORD of hosts” in this verse (and five other times in this chapter). He desires to be *great among the nations*. This is why He chose Israel, and us as well, so that through Israel He might show Himself to be great among the nations.

But what happens when the great God isn’t great in the lives of His people? We find the answer in today’s text, in a message entitled, “*Leftover Religion: When the Great God Isn’t Great in our Lives.*”

Scripture Reading: Malachi 1

Do you like leftovers? Think about the day after Thanksgiving, and the food that was left from the previous day’s feast. Now think about five days later, and the food that still remains from that meal in the refrigerator. What do you do with your leftovers, and I mean, your *leftover* leftovers?

This is the mindset that Malachi is addressing in Malachi 1. His people were giving their leftover leftovers to God. I don’t have in mind food now. We’re talking about a spiritual progression from enjoying a feast with God, to giving Him things you

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Malachi series preached in 1994..

don't even want anymore. It's a mindset that we too can adopt, a perspective on life by which we give God what is convenient to us, and think we are doing Him a favor. We might call it Leftover Christianity. The American Church is plagued by this Leftover Christianity mentality.

Have you ever wondered what God thinks of leftovers? We're going to find out from Malachi today, for in the fifth century BC, that's what His people were giving Him.

Malachi means "my messenger". Kevin DeYoung suggests that we should think of the book of Malachi as a big argument, and the man Malachi as the quintessential attorney for God. Nearly all the prophets do this, but especially Malachi, who speaking in behalf of the Lord, brings a lawsuit against Israel for violating the covenant.²

As we work through the book, we're going to see a phrase again and again. It's the phrase, "But you say." It's as if Malachi is raising exhibit A ("But you say" 1:2), then exhibit B ("But you say" 1:6), then exhibit C ("But you say" 1:7), then exhibit D ("When you say" 1:12), then exhibit E ("But you say" 1:13). Then comes exhibit F in 2:14, and exhibit G in 2:17, and exhibits H, I, and J in 3:7, 8, 13. "But you say. But you say. But you say."

What's he doing? Again, he's arguing for God. He's standing in the courtroom and citing the evidence that proves that God's people have violated the covenant stipulations.

But he doesn't just prove guilt. At the end of the book he does something a prosecuting attorney never does in a courtroom in our day. He offers a message of hope to the guilty. He announces that the offended party (God) is going to rescue the guilty party (His wayward people). Amazing. Who does such a thing? The great God does, who offers sinners both a message of judgment and hope.

In Malachi 1 Malachi, speaking for God, begins to cite the evidence and calls attention to two indicators of leftover religion.

I. Leftover religion cheapens the love of God (1-5).

Malachi's book begins in verse 1, "The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi." The KJV says, "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi." We know very little of Malachi. We know he ministered in a difficult time, the fifth century BC. More about that in a moment. We know he called his message an "oracle," a "burden," for the message he received from God was a heavy message, an unpopular message of rebuke, a call to repentance. And we also know he ministered to a people who had a very distorted view of God.

How do we know that? We see it in the dialogue, the *argument* that takes place in this book. *God said*. Then, *but you say*. Back and forth goes the argument in the courtroom, as God, speaking through Malachi, reveals what He hears His people saying.

He begins in verse 2, saying, "I have loved you," says the LORD." In a real sense, this is God's motivation for this court-brief. This book is a love letter from God, for God truly love His people Israel. But true love is much more than sentiment. The Lord loved the Jewish people so much that He could not tolerate their ongoing, wicked misrepresentations of Him through word and life.

"I have loved you," He told them, as He calls the court to order.

² <https://christcovenant.org/sermons/malachi-a-covenant-broken-a-covenant-kept/>

Some people have said, “I don’t like the the Old Testament. In the Old Testament we see God's holiness and judgment, but in the New Testament, we see His love.”

That’s not true. Right here, at the start of this Old Testament book, we see the love of God. In fact, the Hebrew verb “to love” is used of God's love thirty-two times in the first thirty-nine books of the Bible. God's love for Israel was unconditional and generous. Time and time again, though they rejected Him, He loved them.

But how did they respond to this amazing, undeserved love of God? Hold on to your seats, as we hear the people’s response to God's love in verse 2.

“But you say, ‘How have you loved us?’” In the KJV, “Yet ye say, In what way hast thou loved us?” To paraphrase, *we don’t see it God, your love that is. You say You love us, but it sure doesn’t feel like it. How have you loved us?*

Have you ever felt that way? Why would the Jews of Malachi's day challenge the validity of God's love? To understand, we need to sketch the backdrop of the story.

The Setting of the Book of Malachi - The setting goes back to Abraham. Two thousand years before Christ, God chose a man named Abram, entered into a covenant relationship with him, and promised to make His descendants into a great nation.

In 1440 BC, God redeemed the nation of Israel, more than two million strong, from Egypt, and gave them the Promised Land. He told them, “Obey Me, and you'll prosper in the land. Disobey Me, and you will be forced to leave the land.”

For several hundred years, Israel's history was like a roller-coaster ride morally. In 722 BC, God fulfilled His warning, and sent the northern ten Jewish tribes into Assyrian captivity. In 586 BC, the same thing happened to the southern kingdom of Judah, and the Jews spent seventy years in exile in Babylon. After the exile, God brought back a remnant to the Promised Land. The temple was rebuilt by Ezra (458 BC), and the wall around Jerusalem was rebuilt under the leadership of Nehemiah (445 BC). There was jubilation, but the truth was, things weren’t the same as before.

This is when Malachi comes on the scene, in the latter part of the fifth century BC, around 433 BC. He’s a contemporary of Nehemiah, and he served during a time of great disillusionment. Earlier prophets had made great promises. For instance, **Ezekiel** said that after the exile, there would be miraculous fruitfulness (Ezek 34:26-30). **Isaiah** had said the Jews would once again become a mighty throng (Isa 54:1-3). **Jeremiah** had said God would raise up another great king like David (Jer 23:5-6). And **Isaiah** had even said that in that day, all nations would come and serve Israel (Isa 49:22-23).

But by Malachi's day, it hadn't happened, at least not yet. In fact, just the opposite. The land was in shambles. Only a small number of Jews had returned to the Promised Land, and though they enjoyed some freedom, the Jews still existed under the heavy hand of Persian rule.

Now plug that reality into the Jews' response in verse 2. When they heard God say, “I have loved you,” the people responded, “God, if you love us, you sure have chosen a strange way to show it.”

Perhaps you can relate. As Walter Kaiser explains, “When times are hard, it is difficult to believe that God loves us. All appearances seem to count against such a belief.”³

The Jews of Malachi's day had become “practical atheists” (that’s Kaiser's term). Oh, they still believed in God. They went to the temple. They even sacrificed their

³ Walter Kaiser, p. 11.

lambs. But it was a belief of habit, a going-through-the motions belief. The God they professed was not *real* in their lives.

It sort of reminds me of many Zionist Jews that I knew in Israel when I lived there. They may have gone to the synagogue, and even identified themselves as those who had faith in the God of Abraham. But love us? If God truly loves us, how could He have let so many of us perish in the holocaust?

And what happens when we develop such distorted views of God and question His love? Here's what happens. We turn inward.

A. When we question God's love, we tend to feel sorry for ourselves. We become fixated with what God isn't doing for us rather than what He is doing. And consequently, we stop serving Him with gladness. Show me a person who has a distorted view of God's love and I'll show you a person that is prone to give God the leftovers from his life. The two go hand in hand.

We are not immune from the mentality of Malachi's people, are we? What do we tend to do when the circumstances of life don't meet our approval? We too become sort of sarcastic towards life, even towards God. "Where are You, God? I thought You said You loved me!"

So how do you help such people? According to Malachi, two actions are needed.

B. When we question God's love, we need to reassess why we are hurting. Why is it that things have gone south in our lives? It's easy to accuse God of not caring, but that's just an indication that we're not thinking rightly.

When life is hard, we need to be brutally honest with ourselves regarding the question why. Why am I in this situation? Malachi pulls no punches, saying, "My countrymen, we're in this predicament because of choices we've made. But God still loves us. If He didn't, He wouldn't be chastening us."

Friends, if things aren't going well in our lives, we too need to ask ourselves *why*. Have we done something that displeases God? Maybe we haven't. Maybe we've experiencing the consequences of others' sins. But maybe God is trying to get our attention, so we'll repent, and receive His mercy in Christ, and change. So before we accuse Him of not loving us, let's reassess the conclusion we've drawn. And then this.

C. When we question God's love, we need to open our eyes to the evidence we are missing. Oh, it's there. We just need to look and see the abundant evidence of His love, says Malachi to his people, and to us.

And what's the evidence? Frankly, God's answer through Malachi is sort of odd. He tells his people to consider what was happening to their blood brothers, the Edomites.

Notice the Lord's question in verse 2, "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. Interesting question. What does it have to do with God's love? Actually, plenty. Remember Isaac? Fifteen hundred years before Malachi, Isaac had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Which one became the son of promise? It wasn't the older, but the younger son.

Listen to God in verse 2, "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated." Esau became the father of the pagan Edomites, a people that lived east of the Promised Land. Jacob became the father of God's chosen nation, the Israelites.

Let's not get hung up on the word *hate* in verse 3. In what sense did God "hate" Esau? We must resist our tendency to read into this word the psychological overtones of our English word. There's no feeling of spite here.

For a more biblical understanding of *hate*, consider the usage of this word in Genesis 29:30-33. Verse 30 says that Jacob “loved” Rachel more than Leah, while verses 31 and 33 describe Leah as “hated.” She was hated in the sense that she came out second best in her rivalry with Rachel.⁴

Jesus used the word “hate” in a similar way in Luke 14:26 when He said, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children...he cannot be my disciple.” What did He mean? That we should have ill feelings towards our family members? No. He’s saying we should love Him MORE THAN any other person.

So the word hate in this context has to do with *ranking*. Kaiser explains, “‘To love’ is, in effect, to prefer or be faithful to one, while ‘to hate’ is to slight or think less of another.”⁵ It wasn’t that God disdained and disliked Esau. It was that He had a special purpose for Jacob. Yahweh loved Jacob. He chose Jacob. He entered into a covenant relationship with Jacob and his descendants, and promised to send the Messiah into the world through Jacob’s line, through whom He would bring salvation to the whole world.

I have loved you, said the Lord. Indeed He had. Why? God’s choice of Jacob had nothing to do with Jacob. It wasn’t because Jacob was good, nor that He chose God. Is that true? Indeed it is, for God chose Jacob before he was even born.

God’s love is a sovereign love that is uninfluenced by anything outside of Himself. That’s true for us as well. The old hymn says it well...

*Lord, 'tis not that I did choose you;
that, I know, could never be,
for this heart would still refuse you
had your grace not chosen me.
You removed the sin that stained me,
cleansing me to be your own;
for this purpose you ordained me,
that I live for you alone.*

*It was grace in Christ that called me,
taught my darkened heart and mind;
else the world had yet enthralled me,
to your heav'nly glories blind.
Now I worship none above you;
for your grace alone I thirst,
knowing well that, if I love you,
you, O Father, loved me first.*

What happened to Esau and his people the Edomites? The Lord humbled that proud nation and He reviews how in verses 3-5, “I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert. If Edom says, ‘We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,’ the Lord of hosts says, ‘They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.’ ‘⁵ Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, ‘Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!’”

⁴ Observation by Wolf, 64.

⁵ Kaiser, p. 27.

And that's what happened. God allowed Edom to be destroyed by the Nabataean Arabs between 550 and 400 BC, never to rise again.

What's the point? It's this. If Israel doubted the validity of God's love, what she needed to do was to take a look at all the other nations, like Edom. Then she'd realize that the only reason Israel still existed was the love of God. Nations come and go, but Israel remains, a testimony to the sovereign, gracious, faithful, *chesed* of God.

When we find ourselves thinking, "I deserve better than I'm getting in life," we too need to remind ourselves that God did not have to love us. Nor did He have to save us which He did by His grace, not our merit. God chose us, as He chose Jacob, not because we are worthy, not even because He knew we'd choose Him. The basis of His choice and all the favors we enjoy now forevermore is this and this alone. He does love us with a sovereign, matchless love.

Kevin DeYoung puts it this way, "You are not special because you're special. You are special because God chose you to be special. This is not an intrinsic specialness but a God appointed specialness." And then adds, "God's love does not start with you or me, but with God."⁶

It's so easy to take the love of God for granted. And when that happens, we start giving Him leftovers. A little church attendance. A few dollars in the offering. A Bible reading now and then. But it's a stale remnant of a love feast we once enjoyed with Him.

If we've been cheapening the love of God, dear friends, let's confess it right now, to ourselves, and most importantly, to the Lord Himself, for He is faithful and just and will forgive us, and cleanse us. Let's take steps once again to cherish His love.

II. Leftover religion cheapens the worship of God (6-14).

Actually, the message from 1:6 to 2:9 is for the priests of Israel (Malachi will confront the people in 2:10-16). But what was true of the priests was true of the people, for as went the priests, so went the people. Both groups cheapened the worship of God.

How do we know if we are cheapening worship? Here are two symptoms.

A. We cheapen worship when we dishonor God's name (6). Notice verse 6, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name."

This is basic. A father deserves honor. A master deserves honor. Well, I deserve honor, says the Lord, for I am both a father and master. But the priests and people in Malachi's name were guilty of a great crime, and the prosecuting attorney is now confronting them with that crime, of dishonoring the name of God.

To make matters worse, they are oblivious to their guilt, as evidenced by defensiveness at the end of verse 6. "But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'" This is the response of the self-righteous. *Who us, guilty? In what way?!*

How had they dishonored God's name? As we'll see in a moment, they did it by irreverent actions right in the temple itself. But irreverent action always starts in the heart, for them and us.

The problem goes way back a thousand years. Moses made it clear what the Lord expected of His redeemed people, telling them in Deuteronomy 10:12, "What does the

⁶ <https://christcovenant.org/sermons/malachi-a-covenant-broken-a-covenant-kept/>

LORD your God require of you, but to *fear* the LORD your God, to *walk* in all His ways, to *love* Him, and to *serve* the LORD your God *with all your heart and with all your soul.*”

This is what God wants from the people He redeems. Simply put, He wants His people to take His name seriously, all the time, with all their heart and soul.

At this point a person might think, “Frankly, that's why I have given up on church. Church is filled with hypocrites, and I don't want to be in their number.”

But wait. As we'll see from Malachi, the solution isn't to abstain from worship, but to engage in the kind of worship that pleases our great God, and this involves embracing every opportunity available to honor His Name.

We cheapen worship when we dishonor God's name. Here's a second symptom.

B. We cheapen worship when we defile God's altar (7-14). In verse 7 Malachi places this incriminating evidence before the priests in the courtroom. The NIV says, “You place defiled food on my altar.” The ESV calls it “polluted food.”

What's an altar? An altar was a special gift from God to His people where they would bring special gifts to Him. The altar was a place of sacrifice, a place where a sinful, redeemed Jew could bring to God a lamb or goat, or if the person was wealthy, an oxen, or if poor, a bird. And the priest would kill the animal, and place it on the altar. And when God saw this act of faith and devotion, He would forgive the sinner.

The Jews had done this for hundreds of years, with thousands of animals. But in Malachi's day, the people's skepticism regarding God's love showed itself at the altar.

What did Malachi say the Jews were bringing? Defiled, polluted food. The word “pollute” means “contaminated,” and usually refers to hands or clothes stained with blood (Isa 59:3). Malachi has in mind a scene in the temple. It happened every day. He can see the priests doing their job, offering sacrifices. They knew better, but they were defiling the altar of God.

How? That's what they wanted to know. Notice verse 7, “But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’” In the NIV “How have we defiled you?”

And Malachi's answer? The end of verse 7, “By saying that the Lord's table may be despised.” NIV, “By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible.”

They were offering God pollution. It happened in two ways, and still does. One if the offerer is polluted, and two if the offering is polluted. Both were true.

Notice verse 8, “When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts.”

Growing up I raised animals, and I can relate. We had some cattle out in the pasture, but inside I kept my prize 4-H calves. They were special, for they were money to me (they were how I bought my first car). So suppose I had to bring an offering to the temple, and I knew the one out in the lot was worth a certain amount, but my prize calf inside was worth twice that amount, and if I knew either animal was just going to be killed anyway, which would I give?

This was the choice the Jews faced every time they traveled to the temple. Which animal should I take? And does it really matter?

God, through Malachi, says *yes*, it matters. In fact, in verse 8 He says that what the Jews were doing on that altar was *evil*. It's the same word used in Daniel 11:21 to describe what Antiochus Epiphanes did to the altar. Antiochus, a pagan king, did the

unthinkable when he desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar (165 BC). What the Jews were doing was just as bad.

When it comes to worship, God looks at both the offerer and the offering. So if my heart is not pure, the sermon I'm preaching is polluted. If your heart is not pure, the songs you just sang are polluted, and the money you put in the collection box is defiled.

Malachi shows us there are two ways to defile God's altar. Both are dangerous.

1. *We are in danger when what we give God costs us little.* The Jews brought, and the priests accepted animals that were blind, crippled, and diseased. That was a clear violation of God's Law (Deut 15:21). It even violated the law of common sense. Malachi charged them, "Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you?"

What was the problem? The Jews were giving God what cost them little. You see, God measures a gift by what it costs us, not by its intrinsic worth. That's why Jesus said the widow who gave the two mites gave more than the rich man (Mark 12:42). If a gift means little to us, it will mean little to God.

Can you imagine sending a letter like the following to our governor: "Dear Sir, Please accept this sick cow in lieu of the taxes I owe you. I trust that the old 'bag' recovers and will prove more useful to you than she has been to me. Frankly, I just can't spare anything more than this at the present time. Oh, yes, please look after those requests that I made. I trust you will be able to improve our local roads and upgrade the quality of our education. Sincerely, a grateful citizen."⁷

Would the governor stand for such flippancy? Well, then, why should God? Especially since He is a great king (verse 14). You see, the problem wasn't that the Jews weren't giving anything to God, but that they were giving Him the leftovers, what they didn't need and didn't want for themselves. And we're so prone to do the same.

Several years ago I read an interesting survey. While 89% agree that "our society is much too materialistic," 84% also say, "I wish I had more money than I do." 71% believe "being greedy is a sin against God," yet 76% say, "having money gives me a good feeling about myself."⁸

Let's be honest. Putting a \$20 in the church offering may be a noble thing for a widow living on \$800 a month. But what about a \$20 offering from a person who makes \$5,000 a month and just spent \$500 for a new golf club? According to Malachi, that's not noble. It's cheating God. That's the word God uses in verse 14, "Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations."

When we give God what costs us little, we're in a dangerous place, for we are defiling His altar. Malachi exposes a second way this happens.

2. *We are in danger when worship becomes a burden rather than a delight.* Action matters, but so does attitude. The Jews developed an attitude towards the altar. We already saw from verse 7 that they said the Lord's altar was "despised." Now notice something else they said.

Notice verses 12-13, "But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is **polluted**, and its fruit, that is, its food may be **despised**."¹³ But you say, 'What a

⁷ Taken from Kaiser, p. 40.

⁸ Conducted by Robert Wuthnow of Princeton University, recorded in Leadership Journal, Winter/94, p. 89

weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD."

Listen to their complaint. "What a burden!" they say. Worship had become a burden to them. Is it a burden for you to give God the best in your life? I've heard it said that if some church-goers took the same attitude towards their work as they do towards the Lord's work, their bosses would have fired them long ago.

Is worshiping God a delight to us, or a burden? Let's be honest. Is the corporate worship of God the highlight of your week, or something optional?

The story is told of two Buddhist monks walking in a thunderstorm.⁹ They came to a swollen stream. A beautiful Japanese woman in a kimono stood there wanting to cross to the other side but afraid of the currents. One of the monks said, "Can I help you?" She replied, "I need to cross this stream." The monk picked her up, put her on his shoulder, carried her through the swirling waters, and put her down on the other side. He and his companion then went on to the monastery. That night his companion said to him, "I have a bone to pick with you. As Buddhist monks, we have taken vows not to look on a woman, much less touch her body. Back there at the river you did both." The other monk answered, "My brother, I put that woman down on the other side of the river. You're still carrying her in your mind."

When it comes to worship, action matters to God, but so does attitude.

The first chapter ends with this sobering pronouncement in verse 14, "Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a **great** King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations."

What sobering words. *Cursed is the cheat*. Who is the cheat? Malachi says it's the person who could give God an acceptable offering, but keeps it for himself, giving God the leftover, instead. When I give God the leftovers, I'm cheating Him. And when I cheat Him, says Malachi, I'm cursing myself.

Make It Personal: In light of Malachi 1, three resolves are in order.

1. *Let's refuse to settle for leftover religion.* Go back to verse 9. Honestly, I'm not sure how to read Malachi's invitation here. He says, "And now entreat the *favor* of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show *favor* to any of you? says the LORD of hosts."

Malachi repeats the word *favor*. You say you want God's favor, which is fine, for He invites you to ask for His favor. But...with the way you've been treating Him, do you honestly think He's going to show you favor?"

The great God is not a Genie, and His altar is not a magic lamp.

Malachi drives home the point in verse 10, "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand."

To reiterate, Malachi's people were not irreligious, for they believed in God, participated in worship services, even gave offerings. Yet God said to them, and to us if we're like them, "Enough! Close the doors!"

⁹ *Leadership Journal*

Friends, this is serious. Let's refuse to settle for leftover religion.

2. *Let's do all we can to make God's name great among the nations.* This is what God wanted from them, and us, as He states so clearly in verse 11. "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be **great** among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be **great** among the nations, says the LORD of hosts."

Great among the nations! That is God's due, and His mission. He who is great deserves for people in the east (where the sun rises) all the way to the west (where the sun sets) and on every corner of this planet to acknowledge His greatness. And He who is great has designed a plan to bring it about.

This is why He chose Israel. This is also why He chose to save you and me too, so that the nations could look at His redeemed people and come to right conclusions about Him.

Is that happening? Are our unsaved neighbors coming to know the greatness of our God by looking at our lives and listening to our words? This is why we must continue to pray fervently that the Lord of the harvest will send missionaries from our number, so that our great God will be great among the nations.

3. *Let's remind ourselves that the One who gave His best deserves our best.* Beloved, think about what God has done for us. *He gave His best.* He sent His own Son to the cross to die in our place. He judged His own Son for our crimes. Now He offers to forgive any person who is willing to repent and believe in Christ, and He gives eternal life to those who trust in Him.

This is why we now come to the Table, to be reminded once again that the One who gave His best for us deserves our best.

Closing Song: #453 "I Gave My Life for Thee" (all four verses)

Communion

Closing charge: Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

Sunday evening: Testimony by Debbie Gulley, PIT in Proverbs 6