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**SERMON TITLE:** Rekindling Love for God  
**SCRIPTURE:** Malachi 1:1-2, 6-14  
**DATE:** October 7, 2018  
*Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

*Why Give?* Series. Read also Luke 12:31-34

*Ruby* lived in England. One day she received a letter in the mail. She rarely got mail. The letter looked official. On it was the seal of the Queen, and so she quickly ran into the house and showed it to her mother. Upon opening it carefully, they found that Ruby had been invited to have tea with the queen.

To say she was ecstatic was an understatement. She began telling everyone—her brother, parents, teachers, soccer team, dance teacher. But each one said, *now Rudy, when you have tea with the Queen you will have to do certain things*. There were protocols to follow, and let's just say Rudy was not the most civilized child in the world. She was not in the practice of using manners or being respectful of others or even polite. She was not really into behaving herself at all! She would have to work to present the proper attitude, to show honor when in attendance with the Queen. And, she would need to take a gift.

The people of God had received the gift of being enabled to return to their beloved city. When God called forth his prophet Malachi, the temple had been rebuilt and the wall restored, but the economy was not so great. The weather was not great either, and lack of rain had produced a famine. So life was a bit tough. Circumstances did not match the time when the first temple was built, when Israel had been ruled by Solomon, when times were peaceful, the economy was strong, and church attendance enthusiastically healthy. Then, it was a magnificent, beautiful new temple and God had descended on the temple in a cloud. The people were assured God was there.

But the memory of God's presence had faded. The new temple seemed small comparatively. The people forgot their former fervor for the Lord and their former passionate worship. Before, their land was their own, but now they were only a province under Persian rule.

In reality, the people had forgotten their first love. Have you ever forgotten that you love someone? The Israelites had forgotten how God had rescued them: that God had led their ancestors through the desert, that God had given daily provisions, and that they conquered cities with God's help. They forgot how God gave them the land for their very own.

If we think about it, we sometimes forget all the stories of God's help in the founding of our own nation, and all the benefits of being a free democracy.

So, after several hundred years, due to faded memory and many challenges the people of God backslid. They felt forgotten. They did not remember how to relate to God. Not even the church leaders took their responsibilities seriously in teaching the people how to honor God. Their bar was low. They just got by.

Remember, they had lived among pagans. They had intermarried. They were influenced by those unbelievers. It matters who you hang out with and they let go of their beliefs and listened to their friends. When they moved back home, they did not return to their previous religious practices or the protocol established by God.

Practices of worship, Bible study, obedient giving, prayer, fellowship, and service have always helped God's people to stay close to God.

But God's people no longer believed they were a special people. It was as if the people's approach to God was, "Yahweh (their name for God) must despise us, or else wouldn't we be treated better?" That is reflected in Malachi's opening words:

"I have always loved you," says the Lord. But you retort, "Really? How have you loved us?" (1:2)

So what does it mean to be God's person when circumstances are not as good as in the past? Churches have declined, which might cause the people of God to say *what is the meaning of the church? Why carry on?* It might cause diminished giving.

Malachi talked to the people as if God was speaking directly to them, as if they and God were talking. Listen in to the conversation. Malachi 1:6-14

The LORD:

"A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. If I am your father and master, where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have shown contempt for my name!"

The PEOPLE & LEADERS:

"How have we ever shown contempt for your name?"

The LORD:

"You have shown contempt by offering defiled sacrifices on my altar."

In those days, the people of God brought sacrifices for their sins and sacrifices of thanksgiving. They also paid a tithe, which we will talk about later. That is where the term "tithes and offerings" comes from. The offering was a gift to God for God's rescue, provision, and forgiveness.

The PEOPLE & LEADERS:

"How have we defiled the sacrifices?"

The LORD:

"You defile them by saying the altar of the LORD deserves no respect. When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is! Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you! But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?"

It sounds like Ruby's story. All the adults around Ruby were trying to help her understand that the Queen, because of her position, was to be honored.

Who is an important person in your life that you would want to impress? If the "big boss" from your company invited you to a dinner at Pappas Steak House or The Mansion, would you wear jeans, a tee-shirt, and sneakers? You wouldn't get in if you did!

What if you got invited to dine with your all-time favorite President of the United States? Would you want to please him? Would you take a shower and put on your best clothes? Would you take a gift? How would you show how honored you were that he extended the invitation to you?

The LORD continues:

"How I wish one of you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not pleased with you, and I will not accept your offerings. But my name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of my name. For my name is great among the nations. But you dishonor my name with your actions. By bringing contemptible food, you are saying it's all right to defile the Lord's table."

Have you visited a Presidential Library? We have one right here in Dallas, the George Bush Library. In it you will find hundreds of gifts given to President Bush by presidents and kings of nations. It is right to honor presidents and kings on the earth. What about the High King of Heaven? Does He not deserve even greater honor?

The PEOPLE & LEADERS:

"It's too hard to serve the LORD."

It would be like if we saved all the bread served for communion until next month and served it to you again, only crusty and filled with mold because we did not want to buy more. That would be rather rude, wouldn't it?

The LORD:

"You turn up your noses at my commands. Think of it! Animals that are stolen and crippled and sick are being presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these? Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord. For I am a great king, and my name is feared among the nations!"

Do you have as hard a struggle giving a sacrifice to the Lord? In your giving, have you considered what the Lord has done for you?

A conversation is just that—two living entities. God is alive. God lives. In that relationship, what you do and say really matters. What you understand about the greatness of God really matters.

When God asks you to give your first and your best, God is saying "trust me. Depend on me. I have all power and as a believer you must acknowledge that, trusting I will happily give you everything you need."

We receive favor from God when we respect him and offer our best as God commands. God is alive! Rekindle that commitment because it will go well with you.

How does your sacrifice honor the Lord?

Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Live into your faith and generously give. You will gain great treasure."

AMEN