
LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

TEXT: Malachi 2:1–9

MAIN IDEA: As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be faithful priests.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- We are **collecting new or lightly used coats, blankets, hats, gloves, and socks** for our neighbors in the Greater Paterson area. You can bring these to the lobby of either campus between October 30 and November 16.
- The **Student Ministry Fall Fest** will be held on **October 29** at our Totowa campus. We've got games, we've got music, and most importantly ... we've got the gospel. No need to register; if you're a student in middle or high school, just show up!
- Our **Student Ministry's Winter Retreat** is happening **February 20–22**. We'll be rocking out at High Point Bible Camp in Pennsylvania. This is a great way for our teens to connect with each other, their leaders, and the Lord. Sign up on the Digital Bulletin.

GETTING STARTED:

- Watch this week's Community Extras Video.
 - **Optional Icebreaker:** Were you raised in a religious tradition with special individuals marked off as priests? If so, what was your impression of them?
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Considering the Priesthood

In the intro to the sermon, Ryan pointed out that God, in this passage, is opposed to the priests' hypocrisy. He noted this as an example where people who object to Christianity often don't realize that God sometimes hates the very things they hate. So, when people say they hate the hypocrisy of Christian leaders, they should realize that God hates it too!

☺ What are some other things that people tend to hate about false Christians that God also hates?

🧠 Think about your answers to the previous question. How is a Christian better equipped to deal with these things, as opposed to someone who does not know God?

In the Old Testament, priests served as necessary intermediaries between God and his people. By performing their duties, priests enabled sinful people to worship God, who is holy. In the New Testament, Jesus perfectly fulfills this function through his death and resurrection, as well as his constant intercession before the Father on our behalf (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:11–14, 23–28; 10:19–25). That is why the office of priest is completely absent from New Testament churches. Rather, Peter calls us all “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own

possession” (1 Pet 2:9), a role that Israel was called to but, apart from Jesus, never could be (Exod 19:5–6).

☺ A priest is someone who brings others to God. Jesus is our great high priest. We are all priests serving under him. What does it look like for you to be a priest in your various domains of life (home, church, work, friendships)?

These Priests Stink!

Read Malachi 2:1–3.

🧠 Recall the sermon from last week, based on chapter 1, verses 6–14. How were the priests not bringing honor to God’s name?

☺ The priests of Malachi were called to speak God’s blessing over their people (e.g., Num 6:22–27). Yet, because they failed to honor God’s name, their blessings were frustrated. What does this say about the connection between our walk with the Lord and our ability to minister to others effectively?

☺ Think about the areas of your life where you are called to be a priest. What specifically does it look like to bring blessing to those places and people?

🧠 In verse 3, God uses vivid imagery to emphasize how much he disapproves of the priests’ unwillingness to honor him. He would remove them, just as they needed to remove the dung of sin offerings to an area outside of the camp to be burned (Lev 8:17). Also, they’d end up with some on their faces on their way out. This hit especially hard, as this was an important part of their ordination as priests (Exod 29:14; Lev 4:11–12). What is the line between using shocking, and even gross, language to bring rebuke and correction, and filthy speech that should not be used by children of God (e.g., Eph 4:29; 5:4)?

A Covenant of Peace and Fear

Read Malachi 2:4–5.

In the Old Testament, the tribe of Levi was selected to be set apart from the rest of the tribes to serve a priestly function. All Levites were called to a life of service to God, and those who were descended from Moses’ brother Aaron were to serve as priests.

🧠 Verse 5 describes God’s relationship with Levi as both a “covenant ... of life and peace,” and “a covenant of fear.” How would you describe the relationship between fear of God and peace with God?

🧠 How did Ryan use the illustration of a seesaw to describe the relationship between the fear of God and all other fears in our lives?

- 💡 What is an area of your life where fear of God would bring you peace?

True Priests

Read verses 6–9.

- 💡 According to these verses, what is the job of a priest?
- 💡 How is this job description reflected in our calling as Christians?
- 💡 💡 Why is “partiality” in teaching and living out truth so dangerous? Where might you be tempted to adjust the truth to fit your audience?

PRAYER TIME

Praise God for allowing us to join in the priestly service of the gospel.

Pray that God would reveal areas of your life where you might be dishonoring him, so that you can effectively bless those around you.

Pray that the fear of God would overcome your fear of other things.