

Robbing God

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Preacher: Rev. Douglas Mackeddie

[0 : 00] A little time this evening as we seek the Lord's help, I'd like us to turn to our first reading in the book of the prophet Malachi. Malachi and chapter 3.

And can we read from verse 6 again, I'm reading from Dr. Eswar's verse 1. But I am the Lord, I change not, and therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Even from the days of your fathers you have gone away from my inordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, says the Lord of hosts.

And he said, wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me, but you say, wherein have we robbed you?

In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house.

[1 : 13] And prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

And so on. Will a man rob God? It might be the inclination of our thinking that this is all about tithes and offerings.

And in one sense it's probably that is true, it is about tithes and offerings. But I think there's a principle line behind all of this. And that is the true relationship that exists between God and the person that may be offering offerings or giving tithes.

It's not what we give, it's how we give it. And do you remember the Lord Jesus made a judgment upon certain kinds of people who thought themselves to be acceptable before God and who had an eternal blessing, that they could just walk into heaven.

And Jesus on that occasion, in that kind of catapult statement, said, He said, get away from me. Depart from me. I never knew you.

[2 : 40] The principle that was governing these people, they thought to themselves that by fulfilling certain actions, they would be classified as acceptable before God.

Very similar is not the case to the man who was in the temple, the Pharisee in the temple, when he thought of it himself and he thought of it other people. He thought of himself of a higher caliber than everybody else.

And that is the great danger of any one of us. That we think to ourselves above what we ought to think. The word of God is constantly reminding us of the importance of thinking soberly, thinking rightly about ourselves.

Not glossing up our lives, but acknowledging and accepting, as we were saying this morning, that Jesus sees us and he knows us where we are at.

And we cannot hide anything from him. The Pharisee in the temple, he looked up to heaven. And he made such an astounding claim upon himself.

[3 : 54] He said, I thank God, he said. Well, immediately you heard that. You'd be inclined to think to yourself, he was a good man. Because he is putting God in the forefront.

I thank God, he said. But the next statement he made, he fell flat on his face, spiritually speaking. I thank God, he said.

I am not like other men are. Nor like this man.

I fast twice in a year. I give tithes of all I possess. He does many things, like so many people think, that give them an entrance into glory.

What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end, as you know only well, is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

[5 : 10] But that principle was not always functioning. And neither could we confess and say that it's functioning with us. The principle is not functioning as it should.

Giving God the glory in everything. Not just in word. That is an easy thing for a Pharisee to do. To express it in word.

Or even to express it in deed. By fulfilling is what he thought. By the sacrifices that he would offer. The tithes that he would give. All the presentation.

Which was so often a great show to the public. Well Jesus, you remember, on one occasion.

Castigated them. When he saw this woman who put in.

Just for farming or whatever it was that she put in. To the treasury. And that was much more acceptable. Why?

[6:10] Because she gave it from the depth of her heart. Now here what do we have in Malachi's prophecy. There's two pictures being played out here.

Throughout the whole of the prophecy. And one we would not maybe want to labour on too much. But we can't ignore it. And the picture is a dark one. Of Israel's spiritual death.

On numerous occasions. Our history was one certainly of spiritual death in so many ways. And God is coming to the point here.

With regard to Israel. He's got a summation with regard to the conduct of Israel. In exactly the same way as he would have it of you and me. And I don't see this in order to make you feel cast down or depressed in spirit.

But just to be honest with ourselves. And to acknowledge whose we are. And whom we serve. And how do we serve God.

[7:12] In what way do we serve him. Not by just putting our hands in our pocket. Whether it be in our front pocket or our back pocket. Whatever might be the weightiest of money that we might be enabled.

As we would say. To give to the Lord. God doesn't want an outward show. He wants a sincere heart. He wants us to come before him.

Pleading with him. For mercy. And for grace. But you know. We even have literally children. And every time I read this passage.

I think. You know. It's exactly what children would do. But we're the same. Listen to what has been said in a few occasions here. God says.

He makes a comment with regard to Israel. He says to him. Return unto me. And I will return to you. Said the Lord of hosts. In verse 7. But ye said.

[8:11] Where shall we return? The implication being. That here. Israel. Is feeling offended by God. That he is suggesting for one moment.

That they have left him. That they have left their first love. That's what God is saying. But you know. That's what children sometimes do. And that's what we do.

If our parent is angry with us. If our parent says something. What did I do wrong? We cannot see that we've done any wrong. Or as I said earlier on. We might try to hide.

The reality of it all. Will the man rob God? That's what God says to his people. But you say. Wherein have we robbed you? Again.

It's this conclusion that we have so often. Of thinking of ourselves. About what we ought to think. Now everybody. Everybody wants to be blessed by God.

[9:09] And I'm quite convinced. And especially those who are of the household of faith. Here this evening. That you come to the house of God. Not to as it were. Fulfill some kind of outward show.

But in essence. What you really want. More than anything else. That you can go out of this place. Having your soul at least lifted. And revived a bit. Even if it meant.

Having to do a bit of soul searching. At the same time. We always. When we come to the house of God. Or when we. Confront our God. Our creator. Redeemer. In worship.

In our family worship. In our own individual worship. In our communicator. We always want to feel good. We always want to feel. As though.

We are satisfied. I just wondered. How that fallacy. In the temple felt. What was he really feeling? He had dished out everything he had.

[10:05] He thought he had. By way of acceptance. Before God. But what was it? It was empty. His life.

Was an empty vessel. It was very sad. And it is in many ways. Tragic. That people have this view. Of themselves. And everything that I do.

Must be acceptable to God. But then they might admit. Well maybe not everything. But surely. I can come to the conclusion. That more of the good I do.

Will make me acceptable. Than to be rejected. By the bad things I do. We know. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The only grace.

That saves us. It's not anything I have done. And that was the case. For the children of Israel. In the Old Testament. It wasn't fulfilling what God had demanded.

[11:02] Yes. They had to be obedient. That was part of the Old Covenant. They had to live in obedience to God. And that obedience was not expected to be just some outward conformity.

To certain regulations and rules. Of course they should have been there. But that should have been natural. It's the same with you and I.

If we love the Lord Jesus Christ. If we say that we love him. It is not born out of the result. Primarily of something that he has done for us.

Going through a difficult stage in one's life. And the Lord comes. And he helps us through that difficult stage. Again. The ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are full of crickles. And I say that guardedly. There were many people who had come to Jesus. And through the work and ministry.

[12:02] The miraculous ministry. Of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people were healed. The lame were able to walk with me. The blind received their sight.

The leper had received healing. All of these things had come upon them. And yes they were blessed. Of course they were. Just in the same way as you and I.

We are blessed. By God's provision. God's provision for each and every one of us. For the children of Israel. They were depending.

Upon their own righteous acts and deeds. Not on the very act of God. And the proficiency that he has made for them. With regard to their deliverance.

How easy it was for these people in Christ's time. Yes. To follow him. If he fed them with the five loaves. And the two small fishes. Or fed others with more food.

[13:08] Yes. Yes they would keep on following him. But then there was such a sad day. It came upon many of them. They stopped following him.

Do you know why? Because the good that God had done. Or Jesus had done for them. Would seem in their thinking. It was drying up.

They weren't really after what Jesus was willing to offer them. What they were after was the sustenance of this life. An easy life. A life.

Maybe a life. Healed from diseases of all kinds. But Jesus. It's one of the most poignant phrases in the whole of scripture. Coming from the lips of Jesus.

But he had to say to his disciples. In a challenging way. Will you also go away? Now we know.

[14:07] How easy it is to go away from the Lord. It doesn't take much. We can slip away from the track and the road that we should be on.

We can find ourselves wandering away into this world. So readily. And then consternation would come maybe upon us. When all of a sudden we begin to realise we are being challenged.

Challenged by the word of God. To accept and to acknowledge. Yes I have robbed God. For these people God says. When they ask the question.

We're in. We don't know anything in these lives of ours. That in any way could bring an accusation against us. Will a man rob God?

Yet you have robbed me in tithes and offerings. It wasn't in the actual tithe. It wasn't in the offering. It was in the way that it was given.

[15:08] That's always the risk. For every one of us. We can do the right thing. But from the wrong motive. That is not something that is exclusively found amongst the children of Israel.

It is found in the church of Christ in the present age. We do it ourselves. And we only have to find ourselves admitting to it.

And of course. One of the consequences of what God is challenging in Israel. It's hard to hear. Is that when you do not follow God.

In the way that you should. Then you are inclined. To lose sight. Of the privileges. And the blessings. That belong to you.

Through the hand of God. Opened up to you. What does God say to these people? We could go down through the history of Israel. And spend a long time. Going down through this whole.

[16:08] Sort of. Gully. Of unbelief and disobedience of the children of Israel. And we can look at our own lives as well. But the point is. God is getting it over to them.

You have robbed me. In the way that you have done. What I have asked you to do. Well yes. You give tithes and offerings. As I said at the beginning.

That was not the real point. That God was making here. It was that that hearts were not right with God. And if your heart and my heart. Is not right with God. At any time.

And then you sit back. And you ask yourself. Why is it. That I feel so dry. And spiritually deprived. We have to ask ourselves. And not blame God.

Where are we wrong? Do we? What have we done? That was in any way curtail. God's hand of promise and blessing. To be stretched out upon us.

[17:04] Each and every one of us. Is to answer that question ourselves. What does he say? Your words. He says in verse 12. Have been stout against me. Says the Lord.

Yet you say. What have we spoken so much against me? We do it all the time. We speak against God all the time. It's fine. When everything.

Pardon the expression. It's rosy in the garden. And everything is going fine for us. But then a providence comes. And it's crushing. Yes.

I'm sure there are people here. Who have felt a crushing providence. One of our ministers. It was within our church.

Another denomination. Now we've got the book. And the book was based upon. His daughter's illness. And then eventual death. And he called the book.

[18:02] A Frowning Providence. And many of us can experience. A Frowning Providence of God. But we take that Frowning Providence of God.

And do we say that. No reply. That God has not been faithful to us. Far from it. And you and I should know by now.

That after many frowning providences. And many blessings have come. If we accept them. And acknowledge them. In the right way. What is God saying to you and to me.

Then you see. He is saying this. Listen to what he says. He has accused them. And as I said. We could have said a lot more. About the accusation against them.

He tells them. Bring in all the tithes. Into the storehouse. That there may be me to my house. And room. Prove me now here with. Say the Lord of hosts. If I will not open to you.

[19:00] The windows of heaven. And pour you out a blessing. I'm also tempted to. Ask you to grab your hands. Who have felt. Even on one occasion.

Or more than one occasion. The windows of heaven. Opened for you. And the blessing of God. Poured upon you. I often find myself.

Linking this passage. Considering what Jesus says. In Matthew chapter 5. In these great Beatitudes. We seek thee God. You know.

Blessed are the poor. For theirs is a kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn. For they shall be comforted. All these blessings.

That God is saying to his people. They are yours. If only you would believe. And accept. That I am God. And besides whom.

[19:55] There is none else. There is no one else. That can provide for you. But give to you. That which you require. This side of eternity. Let me go to these Beatitudes.

Just for a moment or two. He says. Blessed are the meek. For they shall have headed the earth. And I am sure you have heard. Many of the preachers. Talk me through. These parables. And say. That they do express. A kind of. Momentous activity. In the life of the believer. Starting with that time. When you find yourselves.

Exposed. With nothing. Empty. Totally empty. Nothing of my hand I bring. Simply. To that cross I bring.

The man that is full of poverty. Of spirit. Is the one. Who comes eventually. When I mean that poverty of spirit. Is the one who. Recognizes.

[20:53] That there is nothing. In and of himself. It's again. The whole situation. With the. The Republican. In the temple. God be merciful. To me a sinner. As you step forward.

In faith. You find. Each of those steps. Of which Jesus is talking about. In the viatages. Each one. Can be identified. One after another.

As you. Become more aware. Of God's. Theories. With you. In his providence. And his grace. I think it's a marvelous thing. That Jesus spoke.

To the disciples. And to those people. At that time. You know. He spoke out. Specifically. To the disciples. He wanted them to know. That everything they had. This removal.

Of that. Core situation. Which they found themselves. Accepting. The necessity. Of being. Of a meek. And a quiet spirit. The necessity.

[21 : 50] Of humanity. There's one. There's one. That the church. I think. And I say it. Of myself. More than I would say it. Of anyone else. Because how easily.

It is. To be disenfranchised. With regard. To the grace. Of humility. All of us. Stand in a position. Where we find ourselves. Lacking.

In the very thing. That would bring. A great blessing. To us. What was Israel's problem. So often. Arrogancy. Full of pride.

And you know. It's a strange providence. To in a way. That. The way that pride. Reaches up. And grabs us. By the throat. Pardon the expression. But God.

Blessed Israel. And because God. Blessed Israel. She found herself. Full of pride. As though. She was better.

[22 : 45] Than any other people. Better than any other race. How many times. How many times. Did Jesus. Even when you. Take the Samaritan woman.

This morning. Use people. The background. That you would think. That is strange. The Samaritan woman. The disciples. Were.

Were. And. Founded. That he should. Even be speaking. To her. She was. They knew. They must. Have known. Something about it. That he would. Be speaking.

To her. That he would. Even when you come. To. That parable. You remember. Of. The. The. The. Parable. Of the prodigal son.

The parable. Of the prodigal son. Is an evident. Token. To mankind. To the. Household of faith. That there is still. Hope. For those of us.

[23 : 38] Who maybe. Have traversed this world. And gone further. Away from God. Than we ever. Should have done. If you are wanting. Your soul. Your heart. To be blessed.

What are you going to do? What are you going to give up? What are you going to. Get rid of? Everything. Surely. There's going to be.

An inhibition. With regard to the. Blessings. Of the spirit. Of Christ. Upon us. This whole passage. Is taken forward. By the children. Of Israel.

To the messianic. Hope. That they seem. To be locked in time. And probably. No more locked in time. Than you and I can be. We can get locked.

Into our own. Particular. Funny ways. Or strange ways. We become. So tied up. In knots. Christ. Has made us free.

[24 : 32] He has liberated us. Not to be worldly. Not to follow. The ways of the world. But to follow. The ways of the Lord. Jesus Christ. He says.

Come. God says. Come. Prove me now. And every single soul. Here. That is a believer. In the Lord. Jesus Christ. Has already proved. But sometimes.

Somehow or other. We constantly. Need. God's proof. And maybe. We're looking for it. In all different directions. When in actual fact.

It is right in front of us. It is in the word. The promise. That Jesus. Has made. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. Even some of these psalms.

That we have been singing. Are a reminder to us. That God. Is the protector. Of his people. Oh yes. Having said that. As a church. The church of Christ.

[25 : 26] Part of the church. Of Christ. Universal. We can look out. Upon this sea. Of unbelief. And godlessness. And we can see. How the church of Christ. Is under great persecution. That is true.

And it makes you. You make sometimes. Your faith. To shake. But it's good. Is it not. That Jesus. Prays for us. To keep us. On an even keel.

To keep us. From falling headlong. Just because. Circumstances. Seem to develop. Our souls. So strongly. That we lose sight. Of what has been done. For us.

Jesus said. Blessed in a poor. In spirit. Blessed. Blessed are the meek. Blessed he says. Are they that mourn. Blessed are those. Who hunger and thirst. After righteousness.

It's as though. Jesus is taking. What God has already. Promised and said. Look. Lay hold upon. All of these things. And claim them. For yourselves.

[26 : 26] Has God. Stopped. Opening the window. Of heaven. To you. As an individual. Do you find yourself. In a waste. In a waste. Howling wilderness.

Again. Do you find. That this journey. Of the Christian life. Is becoming. A sluggish. Journey. That there is no more. As it were.

Vibrancy. Peter. Did he answer to it. Did he not. Peter knew. What it was. To learn. The lesson. Of having been. Disobedient. To Christ. Even to the point. Of. Yes. Turning his back. Upon him. For a time. Denying him.

But. What did he learn. The tribe. Of your faith. He said. Might be found. More precious. Than gold. Will be tried.

[27 : 23] With fire. And will be found. And to praise. And to honor. At the appearing. Of Jesus Christ. Now whatever. Peter was.

One thing. Is sure. He learned. The lesson. Of faith. And trust. Putting our trust. In him. Who is the altogether.

Lovely one. And the prince of peace. But with Israel. What was the blessing. That God was going to. Pour out upon her. To subdue.

All his. And our enemies. Yes. But not the way. That Israel brought. He has. Now. Subdued. All his. And our enemies. Through the giving.

Of his son. The greatest gift. Of all. And he has blessed us. And he has opened. The windows of heaven. With that blessing. Of sending redemption. Through Jesus. It can become a cliché.

[28 : 21] And it's dangerous. To use text. Just as a cliché. That God. So loved the world. That he gave. His only begotten son. That whosoever.

Believes in him. Should not perish. But have everlasting life. What is God asking of us. Of you and me. To notice.

That heaven's windows. Are already open. And the blessings. Are flowing down. Timelessly. Day by day. Day. Day by day. Day by day.

And there is not enough room. Of all those blessings. To be received. By any one of us. Do you know what happens? We can sometimes miss them.

I know I had a discussion with a minister. Some. Who is a very good friend of mine. At Edinburgh. And he said to me. He says. There is no such thing as a believer. Losing a blessing. You could argue with that one all night.

[29 : 20] But I am not going to do that here. And I think there is a truth in what he said. But I think we can lose the benefits of the blessing. It is not that the blessings are not there.

They are all around us. The God's gift from heaven. And the person of Jesus Christ. Indwelling in the believer. What a blessing. To think.

That the spirit of Christ. Is in each and every one of us. As believers. And if there is. If we cannot see that. As probably one of the greatest blessings of all.

Then there is something far wrong. The spirit. Is already there. The spirit is working in his people. And yes.

There are times. When we have fallen short. Of the glory of God. Thanks be to God. Who has given us the victory. Through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 16] Now. If I see in the temple. He can say as much as he likes. It is going to get him nowhere nearer heaven. He is not going to be blessed at all.

As long as he takes the route that he is taking. But where he would be blessed. Is that he accepted himself for what he is. Before a Christ holy God. And called upon God.

And said to him. God be merciful to me a sinner. How many of us. Are beyond that principle. None of us.

Nobody is beyond that. Without Christ. We have nothing. Paul says in Ephesians. He says this. You he said. Who were dead. And trespasses and sins. Have been brought nigh. By the blood of Christ.

[31 : 13] There is your blessing. There is the blessing. That came through the open window. Of the windows of heaven. Poured upon the children of men. And we are sustained by that.

Continually. So. Yes. Question. Question yourselves occasionally. Yes. Regularly. About your relationship to God.

Ask God. Sincerely. In what area of my life. Have I robbed you. Don't say. Wherein. Have I robbed you. Acknowledge. That all of us. Come short of the glory of God. Remember this.

That what God is doing here. To the children of Israel. And with us. I'm going to conclude. What God is doing here. For the children of Israel. Is to lay out. That promise. Of the open windows of heaven.

[32 : 12] To be poured upon Israel. And to all. Who by faith. Would come to the Lord Jesus Christ. And all who by faith. Who would come to the Lord Jesus Christ. That would be a fellowship. And excellence. Of people. Of all generations. Coming together. Together. Yes. Yes. And a book. Of remembrance. Fitting about us.

What would the remembrance be. At the end of the day. Jesus saying. Depart from me. I never knew you. What would it be.

Enter in. To the joy. Thy rest. That's what we have to look forward to. That's the fulfillment. Of God's great blessing.

To sinners. Such as you. And me. And we'll lead it there. This evening shall we pray. O Lord. Our gracious God.

[33 : 12] We do thank thee. For the testimony of thy word. That is the reminder to us. Of the need that we have. To close in with Christ. Day by day. We acknowledge.

With shamefacedness. Our paltry spirit. Our paltry obedience. Help us. We pray thee. Energize us. Lift upon us.

The light of thy condemnation. Do thou be gracious to us. We pray thee. Let the word of Christ. Dwell in us. In all wisdom. Forgive us.

We pray thee. For our slothfulness. Our carelessness. Our indifference. And help us. To submit ourselves. Humbly and meekly. And to say. Who is a God.

Like unto thee. Go before us then. Forgiving all offense. And anything that we have said. Anything that we have thought or done. And accept of us in the beloved.

[34 : 11] Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude. About singing in Psalm 65.

In the same Psalms version. And we're going to sing. Verses 9. To verse 13. Page 82.

You tend the land. And water it. You make it rich and good. As you ordained. Your streams are full. To give the people food. You drench the fowls of the land. You level off the ground. You soften it with showers of rain. And make its crops abound. You crown the year with fruitfulness.

Your harvests overflow. The grassland flourishes again. The hills with gladness glow. The pastures green. With flocks are clothed. The meadows covering.

[35 : 09] The valleys deck themselves with corn. They shout for joy. And sing. And so on. So often this occurs. Is it not? That even the creation itself.

Seems to give more honor. And glory to God. Than we do. Psalm 65. Verse 9. You tend the land. And water it.

You tend the land. And water it.

You make it rich and good. As you are in your dreams.

Father. You've come to say hey.

[36 : 07] tylkorative. Of all his■eme how Deadline West. He will never repay. You heaven off the ground. You saw the air with charge of grace and make its cross above.

You crown the air with fruitfulness, your harvest overflows.

The crown of the rich and the heavy air with kindness, your harvest overflows.

The vast church in red-flown circles, the meadows cover in.

The valley of the temple, the whole nation for joy and shame.

[37 : 37] And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and remain with you and with all the Israel of God, both now and always. Amen.