

what Jesus said to the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:15-16. In other words, mediocrity makes Jesus sick.

God says something about this subject in our text: Malachi 1:6-14. God is displeased with mediocre, less than excellent service. He deserves the best we have. He is displeased when we try to cheat Him. He despises offerings of inferior quality.

There are at least four important lessons we can learn about giving God our best from this passage.

Lesson 1. There's always a reason to offer God less than our best.

We need to be reminded what was happening when the events we read in our text occurred. The approximate date was around 430 BC. The place is Jerusalem. Some years before, the people had returned from exile in Babylon and found the city in ruins. They began to rebuild the temple and to rebuild the city walls. However, as the people began to settle into their lives, they forgot the lessons of the exile and they began to put their own priorities in front of God's priorities. They began to neglect the proper worship of God. Even the priests were guilty. Their reasons for doing so were problem similar to our own reasons. These reasons generally fall into three categories:

Category number one is referred to as **expediency** – doing things cheap and easy. It is just a lot cheaper and easier to offer God a defective animal rather than a perfect one.

Things haven't changed much. We think it is okay to just "get by" in our Christian lives. We think leftovers are good enough for God. We try to give Him our leftover time, our leftover money, and our leftover energy. Then we wonder why God doesn't bless our lives.

Category number two is simply possessing a **bad attitude**. We really just don't care about what we offer and how we offer it. Someone said we have Cain's problem. God blessed Abel's sacrifice because he gave out of the best he had and gave it the way God prescribed. Cain just grabbed whatever was convenient. His desire was not to honor God but to get the offering over with and move on to something more important.

Category number three is what is called the **popular argument**. It is the thinking that says, "Everyone else is doing it. Since everybody else is doing it, why should I hold to a higher standard?"

Lesson 2. Our Service reveals our attitude toward God.

The big issue is that our choice to give God less than our best reveals several things:

A. It reveals the priority that we place on our relationship with God. It shows that our desire to grow in our relationship with Him is less than we profess. It shows that we are more interested in things other than what please God.

B. It also reveals that we treat God in a way that is dishonorable. We show God less honor and respect than we give our parents or governmental leaders. We're more concerned with ourselves, and the things that please us.

Lesson 3. Service is meant to be costly.

It was meant to cost something when God told His people to give of the best of their flocks and their fields (Proverbs 3:9). We forget that God has given us far more

than we deserve. God has never cut corners or taken the short cut or found a cheaper or easier way.

There is a cost of serving God with excellence. **Excellence Takes Hard Work.** There's a big difference between a "pretty good job" on something and doing it with excellence. Excellence takes a lot more time.

Excellence takes time and effort. When I was in college and seminary they said you should spend one hour in preparation for every minute spent in the pulpit. In other words, a 30 minute sermon would take 30 hours to prepare. However, the more experienced one becomes at sermon preparation the less time it takes. After thirty years of preaching it takes me 10 to 16 hours a week preparing for each sermon. And believe me, you and I both can tell the difference between the 10 hour sermon and the 16 hour sermon. One may be satisfactory while the other is better.

Excellence is Evidenced in the Details. A commitment to excellence (or the lack of it) often shows up most clearly in the way we do the "little" things. Jesus taught us that we have to be faithful in the small things before we can receive the bigger blessings (Luke 16:10).

Excellence Takes Daily Diligence. Suppose you build a new house. When the house is finished, you plant a flower garden and landscape your yard. You might do all those things with excellence, then step back and say, "That's beautiful."

But it's not long before your work begins to deteriorate. The walls need repainting, the grass has to be cut, and the weeds have to be pulled from the flowerbed. You can't relax for long. If your home is going to maintain that look of excellence, the work must be ongoing. You can lose the edge really fast.

The same thing is true in our lives and our churches. We can get used to just getting by. Our duty is to live as stewards of what God has blessed us with. Stewardship should not be slipshod. Someone once said, "Mediocrity is excellence in the mind of the mediocre." Jesus taught that unfaithful stewards were both wicked and lazy.

Lesson 4. God expects and deserves nothing less than our best.

One church has a slogan that I think sums up this thought: *--If it bears His name, it deserves our best.*

That is reflected in 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 15:58b. Our "best" doesn't mean perfection or superiority. Charles Swindoll said, "Excellence is a difficult concept to communicate because it can easily be misread as neurotic perfectionism or snooty sophistication. But it is neither. On the contrary, it is the stuff of which greatness is made. It is the difference between just getting by and soaring – that which sets apart the significant from the superficial, the lasting from the temporary."

Striving for excellence simply means making every effort in preparation and execution to do the very best you can. Our God is worthy of our best efforts (Psalm 145:3, Revelation 4:11). If you're someone who has been cheating God, please stop. Stop offering God contemptuous sacrifices. Stop giving God your last-minute, half-hearted, left-over, and warmed-up efforts. Don't slap something together and pretend it is okay. Stop giving God what you wouldn't give to your spouse, your boss, or anyone else (2 Timothy 2:15).

Conclusion

David Livingstone was one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived. He moved to Africa, married his wife Mary in Africa in 1845, and never stopped pursuing excellence for the Kingdom of God during his lifetime.

There was a time when Dr. Livingstone was approached about the possibility of a missionary society sending some more men to help him in his efforts to reach the people of Africa. They wrote him a letter that read, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you."

Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

Why should we give God our best? We should do so because He gave us His best (Romans 8:32). God gave the best He had – His own Son, Jesus Christ – to suffer and die in our place for our sin. Do not be like those in Malachi's day. Do not allow your worship to be second-rate leftovers that God rejects. Here are nine suggestions to keep that from happening.

- (1) Make your worship of God a priority
- (2) Make your worship God centered
- (3) Put your heart into it
- (4) Prepare before coming to worship
- (5) Be on time
- (6) Bring your Bible
- (7) Listen
- (8) Participate
- (9) Expect wonderful things to happen – to you and to those around you

Don't Offer God Leftovers!

You Are Loved

Tuesday is Saint Valentine's Day. Husbands or boyfriends best not forgot about it. One husband asked his wife a few days ahead what she wanted for Valentine's Day. She said, "Nothing." But he found out different when the day arrived.

Do you remember the story behind the origins of Valentine's Day? It's called Saint Valentine's Day for a reason. Approximately 250 years after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there was a priest by the name of Valentine. He lived in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius, who was committed to rebuilding the once-great Roman army. However, he believed it was important for men to volunteer for armed service, rather than drafting men into service against their will. But, given a choice, most young men in the Roman Empire refused to serve. They'd rather stay at home with their wives and children that go off into battle.

Claudius came to believe that only single men would volunteer for service, so he issued a royal edict that banned all further marriages. He actually outlawed weddings in the Roman Empire, earning himself the nick-name Claudius the Cruel. Valentine thought it was ridiculous. One of his favorite duties as a priest was to marry people. So after Emperor Claudius passed his law, Valentine secretly continued performing marriage ceremonies. He would whisper the words of the ceremony, while listening for soldiers on the steps outside.

One night, Valentine did hear footsteps at his door. The couple he was marrying escaped, but he was caught. He was thrown in jail and sentenced to death. Valentine tried to stay cheerful. Many of the young couples he had married came to visit him in jail. They threw flowers and notes up to his window. They wanted him to know that they, too, believed in love.

One day, he received a visit from the daughter of one of the prison guards. Her father allowed her to visit him in his cell and they often sat and talked for hours. She believed he did the right thing by ignoring the Emperor and performing weddings. On the day Valentine was to die, he left her a note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty. He signed it, "Love from your Valentine." That note started the custom of exchanging love notes on Valentine's Day. It was written on the day he died, February 14, 269 A.D.—a day set aside in honor of a man who gave his life for God and for love. Now, every year on this day, people remember Saint Valentine,

but most importantly, they think about love.

Everyone loves love. We want to be loved and we want to give love. The problem is our love is lacking just like we are. It's often conditional upon our own mood or our loved one's actions, appearance or attitude. When it comes to love, all of us fall a little short. Some of us are as confused about love as little five-year-old Kari who told her teacher, "Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." The question for us today is, "How do we develop and nurture a love worth giving every day? Jesus gives the answer in John 15:9-17. Read and do what Jesus said.

God Bless You!

Bro. Allan

Opportunities For Service

Living out Your Spiritual Commitment . . . and Fulfilling Christ's Divine Plan

Sunday, January 12, 2017

Choir Rehearsal..... 9:00 am

Sunday School 9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: John Lewis, Gary Yarbrough, Joseph Coats, Isaac Waters

Alternate: Larry McKahan

January Bible Study.....Noon

No Evening Worship.....

Tuesday, February 14

Valentine's Day

Wednesday, February 15

Youth Study..... 6:30 pm

Prayer / Bible Study6:30 pm

Adult Choir 7:30 pm

Thursday, February 16

O Team.....6:30 pm

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Choir Rehearsal.....9:00 am

Sunday School.....9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: ? ? ? ?, Ken Nice, Don Sharp, Fred Kerns

Alternate: Isaac Waters

Evening Worship.....6:30

Wednesday, February 22

Youth Bible Study.....6:30 pm

Bible Study.....6:30 pm

Adult Choir.....7:30 pm

Thursday, February 23

W Team.....6:30 pm

Up-Coming Events.....

February 12 — Food Pantry Collection Day

— January Bible Study at Noon

February 14 — Valentine's Day

February 16 — Food Pantry Day

February 20 — President's Day

March 4 — Kevin Rowe in Concert 4-5 pm

March 10-11 — NW Region Disaster Relief Training

Save the Date!
Area Men's Retreat
August 19, 8 am to 3 pm
Frederick Boulevard Baptist Church

GROW Team

Commit to **GROW!** Everyone make a contact! Invite someone to Bible Study and Worship this week. ☺

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Sunday Nights

We will not have Bible study tonight at 6:30 pm.

Wednesday Night Prayer and Bible Study

We will meet Wednesday at 6:30 pm. We are doing a new study by Erwin Lutzer entitled, ***One Minute After You Die***. This eight session study focuses on what we can know for certain about what happens after we leave this world. Hope to see you here!

Thanks for the Meal!

Your thoughtfulness and generosity are greatly appreciated by all.

MWSU

BSU

Food Pantry Collection Day!

Today, February 12

You may place your non-perishable items in the basket in the hallway at any time.

Thank You!

January Bible Study

Malachi

Today, Sunday, February 12, 2017

Following the morning worship service with a lasagna lunch that will be provided. Just bring a dessert. Please plan to attend. Randy Harr will lead Session 3—*Why Are We Unfaithful to One Another?* (Malachi 2:10-16)

Tim Waters will lead

Session 4— *Where Is the God of Justice?* (Malachi 2:17–3:5)

KEVIN ROWE
COUNTRY GOSPEL SINGER
IN CONCERT
here at
Calvary Baptist Church
March 4, 2017
4-5 pm
A church-wide
fellowship will follow.

**Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief Training
March 10-11**

Cost for first time
registration is \$20.00.

Pleasant Valley Baptist Church 1600 North 291 Hwy
Liberty, Missouri 64068

For the Record-

Attendance: February 5, 2017

Sunday School.....	35
Visitors.....	1
Total.....	36
Contacts Made.....	6
Morning Worship.....	44
Children's Worship.....	N/A
January Bible Study.....	14
Wednesday Night	15

Financial Record:

Weekly Budget	\$ 2,040.52
Offering Received ...	\$ 4,172.28

Offering Received by Mail:

February Counting Team:

Larry McKahan and Jordan Lane

February Van Driver:

Mike Green

Remember to call 232-3747
before 8 am if you need a ride.

February Member Birthdays:

05...Matthew Mayse

06...Eileen Smith

February Anniversaries

George and Brenda Burgess

February 25, 1995

Prayer Requests ...

Rev. A. B. Brown

Tommy Mummert—heart surgery

Claud McClain—leg amputated

Tracy Maisel and Tim Ford

Sue Higgins—upcoming surgery

Juanita and Bill Haskins—adjustments

Tim Izer

Gary & Peggy Fewins, Byron & Joel

George Ferbert—strength

Nellie Reynolds—recovery at home

Troy Griswold—cancer

Larry Danner—cancer treatment

Cynthia Burdick—cancer treatment

Jim Winans at home

Karissa and Matt Long and family

Betty Campbell—healing

Marcia and Don Hart—future plans

Lisa Bowers—Jack and Flo's daughter

LoLeta Middleton—strength

Ellen Blanton and Lois Ulmer—

Elvera's daughter & daughter-in-law

Stella Davis and Linda Rails—Doris

Richardson's sisters

Madeline Swink Sue Higgins

Kathryn Beavers Ann Riddle

Louanne Laurence Keon McKahan

Jozy Winans Leona Reynolds

Kevin Duty Kenny Duty

Pat Puckett Buddy Means

Bill Haskins Debbie Sands

Brenda Burgess Judy Anderson

Carolyn Houts Roscoe Lane

Missionaries Don and Diane Combs

Nickolay Nazaruk, Peski 2 Church

David and Deborah Grace

Jeanette Swackhamer—Beja People

Our Nation and Leaders

Our Military Service people

Today's Prayer Requests ...

Our Nation and our Leaders ...

Five More New Families...
