

MALACHI: Bored with God

Sunday, September 1, 2019

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Malachi 1:1-14

Malachi's prophecy calls the wayward and the spiritually apathetic people of God to renewal and revival and faithfulness and reformation. The prophecy begins with God's declaration to the people: "I have loved you." The electing, sovereign, faithful, unbreakable love of God for God's people is the backdrop for everything else that Malachi will say, even when he is delivering God's indictment on the peoples' sin, particularly about their lackluster worship.

When God's people returned from exile in Babylon, they rebuilt Jerusalem and restored the temple, they reestablished the priesthood and worshipped God. But very quickly a spiritual sickness descended upon God's people. Everything in their spiritual lives turned cold and gray and lifeless. They stopped going to worship. They ceased praising God's name. They failed to bring their offerings before God. They grew bored with worship.

Rather than giving God their best worship, the people give an approximation, raising weak praise to God, and paying God the barest of lip-service. They acted as if they were doing God a favor, and they expected God to accept and be satisfied with the scant praise they offered. They tired of what worship demanded of them. They had no patience for the claim of God on their lives. In fact, in verse 13, the people express their true feelings about worship: "What a weariness this is." They grew bored with God.

Boredom means being weary and restless and uninterested. It becomes a statement about something's worth. Boredom says that something is unimportant, unimpressive, and unsurprising. Perhaps it once captured our interest, but no longer. We discount it, devalue it. It becomes, at best, a thing to be suffered and endured. When we get bored with a thing, we stop caring about it; the thing no longer matters to us in the same way it once did.

When worship becomes a drudgery where once it was a delight, when we find ourselves saying about the hymns and the songs and the prayers and the sermon, "What a weariness!", it is a sure sign of spiritual boredom and profound soul sickness. The half-hearted worship of the spiritually bored is dangerous because it dishonors God and God will not accept it! If we do not bring God our best worship, God will reject it.

God asks the people: Would you serve an inferior meal to an honored guest, like a governor (v. 8-9). Of course not! It would be an insult, an embarrassment. But too often we come before God in worship with a grudging, meager indifference, offering the dregs of our time and our leftover resources. God is an afterthought, an inconvenience, a burden, a weariness. Of such grudging praise and reluctant worship God says: "*I have no pleasure in you...and I will not accept an offering from your hand*" (v 10). Weak worship devalues God. Halfhearted worship exposes our boredom with the person of God!

Blogger Frank Powell offers six reasons why God's people grow bored with God. **We grow bored because we're too familiar with God.** Many Christians know Bible verses and stories by heart, which is great, until we know them so well that we no longer feel their transformational power. Preachers struggle with this every Christmas and Easter: how do you tell the old, familiar story in such a way that it is new and inspiring all over again? God became human to live with us! Jesus rose from the dead conquering sin and death! Jesus turned water into wine, healed the sick, fed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, and walked on water! These are compelling, life-changing events. If we've lost our sense of awe and wonder at what God is doing and saying, then we need to take a break, reorient our hearts and minds, and return to God's Word with open hearts and a fresh perspective.

We grow bored because we're disconnected from God's creation. Richard Louv wrote [The Nature Principle](#) in which he claims that for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, rather than rural environments. The result is "nature-deficit disorder," which he defines as "a diminished ability to find meaning in the life that surrounds us, whatever form it takes." The apostle Paul said something similar: *For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see God's invisible qualities – God's eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God* (Romans 1:20). Every inch of God's creation reveals something about God's character. The more we disconnect from God's creation, the more we disconnect from God. Feeling alienated from God? Turn off the television or the X-Box. Put down the phone. Go for a walk. Sit outside. Go camping, fishing, hiking, or biking. The invisible qualities of God are waiting out there for you to discover.

We grow bored because we don't invest time in meaningful relationships. God created us for social interaction. God exists as a social Trinity and invites us into community. But we're spending less time together. I see this in my own life. I am an introvert, and there are times when I disengage from people to deal with stress or

disappointment. Ironically, the more I disengage from meaningful conversations and neglect important relationships, the more stress I feel. As we become more inward-looking the symptoms of boredom, anxiety, stress, discontent, and depression flourish. If we don't put in the time, we cannot build healthy relationships. Similarly, we can't come to church one hour each week, then wonder why our relationship with God isn't vigorous. We must invest in our associations with other people to experience a full relationship of God.

We grow bored because we aren't living out our unique purpose and calling. God created you for a purpose. There is a specific reason you are here. There is something that God wants you – and only you – to do. That reason has nothing to do with you. It is so much larger than you. It's about showing God to the world through your unique gifts and talents. You weren't created to amass a huge bank account, live comfortably in a big house, or work a 9-5 job just for a paycheck. You weren't made to fill a spot on a pew. Don't mock God by living a mediocre life. Not sure what your unique purpose and calling is? Then that's where you need to focus your energy. When you discover your purpose, come back to worship rejoicing and praising God!

We grow bored because we spend more time doing things for God than being alone with God. Boredom isn't necessarily a negative emotion; boredom can be essential for human development and unlocking creative potential. To avoid a life plagued by boredom, there must be intentional periods of boredom. Call it the paradox of boredom. Here's what it means for Christians. If you want to avoid a discontent, overwhelmed existence, the rhythm of your life must include periods of resting. You must be still and know that God is...God. Christians need to learn the practice of holy boredom. When was the last time you took a time-out and observed a real Sabbath? How long since you spent an extended amount of time alone with God? If you're overwhelmed, disconnect from the speed and noise of the world so that you can hear God's still, small voice speaking to you.

We grow bored because we don't recognize the miracles God performs in everyday life. When my kids were younger, I could amaze them with my feats of strength and mental acuity. I could open chip bags and pickle jars with ease. I could tell jokes and quote movie lines all day long. Now that they are older, they are somewhat less impressed with my antics. I may not be able to perform miracles, but God can and does every day. Christians grow bored with God because they fail to be impressed by the miracles God performs all around us. When God becomes logical, faith becomes boring. Fight the temptation to rationalize God. Open your eyes to the amazing things God does all around you.

There is a story about a new Christian in Africa who started worshipping regularly in her local church. During the service, the offering plate passed through the congregation. She noticed that people took money from their pockets and placed it in the plate; but she was poor, and she had no money to bring. When the plate reached her, she didn't know what to do. So, she set the plate on the ground, stood inside it, and said in a loud voice, "God, I don't have any money, but You can have all of me." That's a miracle! That's true worship from someone who knows herself to be loved by God. She knew that to be loved by God demands all of us in response. Not partial praise carelessly given, but the surrender of our whole selves and all that we have and all that we are. Anything less than our whole selves – heart and mind and soul and strength – is anemic worship, beneath God's dignity and God will reject it.

Jesus displayed this kind of worship for God, worship not based on animal sacrifice, or fancy liturgies, or singing the right music, or saying the right prayers. This is worship predicated on the love God showed to us and which we then share with the world. This form of worship is offered when we love our enemies, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the prisoner. This new worship is about promoting the reign of God here and now. When, in the name of Jesus, we show compassion for others, God is honored. The work of Christian discipleship is the antidote to spiritual boredom. When we accept God's love for us and care for those God entrusts to us, we can truly gather on Sunday mornings to sing God's praises. We can step into the offering plate and say, "Whatever I have is Yours, Lord, and with it You can have all of me." Let's be the worship that is pleasing and acceptable to God!

Let us pray together! *Faithful God, we come confessing that we are easily bored with sacred things, with praising Your name, because in truth, we are easily bored with You. Our hearts are prone to wander, Lord, but here and now we humble ourselves before You and behold the wonder of Your love for us in Jesus. We pray that you would ignite within us the fire of devotion and praise to the glory of Your name. We pray that you would capture and captivate our hearts afresh with the Gospel of Christ. For we ask this in His name, Amen.*

Sources:

- Dr. David Strain. "Bored with Jesus." May 22, 2016. <https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/bored-with-jesus> (Visited August 26, 2019).
- Frank Powell. "Why are so many Christians bored with God?" <http://frankpowell.me/christians-bored-with-god> (Visited August 28, 2019).
- "Familiarity Breeds Contempt: Why Do We Get Bored, and what is the point of Boredom?" June 9, 2015. <https://www.newstatesman.com/sci-tech/2015/06/familiarity-breeds-contempt-why-do-we-get-bored-and-what-point-boredom> (Visited August 28, 2019).