

The Last words of Jesus:
“GO AND FIND THE DONKEY!”

- * The disciples and followers of Jesus had just witnessed three years of miracles!
- * They had watched as He said, “Go fill the water pots,” only to turn them into the finest wine!
- * They witnessed Him instruct the disciples to distribute a few loaves of bread and a hand full of fish, only to feed 5,000 men plus others!
- * He would often ask them to bring the sick, only to have them leave healed!
- * After all of THAT, He is now asking them to bring Him a donkey!
- * Have you ever thought of the circumstances around this event?
- * A...donkey...a dadgum donkey!

I. Can you imagine how the emotions of the last three years were compressed and the expectations of the Messiah and His will being exercised on all of Israel? This must have been the very definition of “climax” or “crescendo!”

A. The disciples had asked Him this:

Matthew 24:1-3 (NIV)

24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2 “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” 3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

1. “When will we see you take over?”
2. “When will you set these religious folks straight?”
3. “Hey Jesus, we have seen all the miracles, now we want to see you straighten these Pharisees and Romans out!”
4. The disciples were “living it up” so to speak in total expectation of Jesus setting up a worldly kingdom!!
 - a) James and John asked to “sit by His side” as some type of “first lieutenant” when He takes charge of things!
 - b) Peter was ready to start this new military conquest when the guards came for Jesus in the Garden!
5. In other words, expectations were high! Though misguided and just plain inaccurate to God’s plans! High none the less!

B. Let’s also consider the daily life of the early church. We get the idea from reading and from others that things were crazy exciting and “a miracle a minute!”

1. There are between 18 to 20 miracles listed in the entire Book of Acts, depending on your definition of a miracle.
2. The Book of Acts spans approximately 32 years!
3. I'm not contending that every miraculous event is listed, but what I am contending is that our life of faith can be very ordinary!
4. Recognizing the "God of the Ordinary" is very important!
5. Let's consider some things together...

II. There are many lessons to be learned throughout the history of God's people!! One thing that I have learned through the years...people are people! No matter our culture in the world or the time of our existence. People are people!

A. The Book of Malachi tells a story that is much like ours today!

1. Malachi was a prophet during the time of Nehemiah!
2. It was a time when Israel was plagued with corrupt priests that flaunted their supposed privileged relationship with God!
3. It was a time of great immorality, false worship and arrogance.
4. It was a time of security, prosperity and normalcy!
5. Yet the "word of God" have no impact on the people!
6. For 400 years Israel would "just exist" and not enjoy being the "Children of God!"
7. They didn't need to, because everything was good and normal!
8. Then...destruction came! Let's learn together!

B. In times of the "ordinary" or as a friend of a friend used as a book title, "God of the Mundane", we tend to lose passion and commitment in our relationship with the Lord.

III. These are the lessons of Malachi!

A. He tells the people that they have not given God the place He deserves in their lives!

Malachi 1:6-7 (NIV)

6 "A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the Lord Almighty. "It is you priests who show contempt for my name. "But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?' 7 "By offering defiled food on my altar. "But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' "By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible.

1. The word "honor" means to "give value to."
2. Can we honestly say that our lives show that we "give value" to the Lord?

3. Do we give Him time? Such as hobbies or luxuries?
 4. Do we speak of Him to others?
 5. You see, during the “normal flow of life” is the Lord on your mind or a part of your life?
- B. It is believed by scholars and borne out in context that they had made the Lord’s table “contemptible” by offering “blemished” sacrifices on the altar.
1. Are we offering God “our best” or does He “get the left overs” or anything “extra” we have to give?
 2. When times are good and life is treating us well we tend to “forget God” and only seek Him when we truly need Him!
- C. Another very vivid example of this “way of life” is found in the life of King David:

1 Chronicles 21:22-24 (NKJV)

22 Then David said to Ornan, “Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar on it to the Lord. You shall grant it to me at the full price, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people.” 23 But Ornan said to David, “Take it to yourself, and let my lord the king do what is good in his eyes. Look, I also give you the oxen for burnt offerings, the threshing implements for wood, and the wheat for the grain offering; I give it all.” 24 Then King David said to Ornan, “No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing.”

IV. Malachi continues his warning in verse 8:

Malachi 1:8 (NIV)

8 When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the Lord Almighty.

A. Israel was constantly told to “offer unblemished lambs” for their sacrifice!

1. First and foremost this was a “type and shadow” or a foretelling of the perfect Lamb of God.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

2. The other part of this principle is:

Do we offer God our best...or just something?

B. Question: Do we worship God for what we can get from Him or for what He keeps us from?

Malachi 1:10 (NIV)

10 "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands.

1. Do we worship God simply because of Who He is?
2. Or are we always out for something?
3. Do we pursue a "loving worshipful relationship" with our Heavenly Father and His Son because He is "the Lover of our soul?"
4. Notice Malachi's phrase, "shut the door!"
5. Isn't it much like the writer of Hebrews when he said,

Hebrews 13:12-13 (NIV)

12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

C. Let's not be guilty of simply "adding our worship" to the busy-ness of life! Let all of life revolve around your relationship with God!

1. Remember the story of Martha and Mary?
2. Martha was "bent out of shape" because she was doing all the work while Mary just sat at the feet of Jesus.
3. She ask Jesus to tell Mary to get up and help and His reply was:

Luke 10:41-42 (NIV)

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

V. Malachi also seems to expose how we can get into a "stale routine" in our life of faith!

Malachi 1:13 (NLV)

13 You say, 'How tired it makes us!' And you turn your nose away from it," says the Lord of All. "You bring what was stolen, and what cannot walk, and what is sick. You bring this as your gift! Should I receive that from your hands?" says the Lord.

Malachi 1:13 (NRSV)

13 “What a weariness this is,” you say, and you sniff at me, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord.

Malachi 1:13 (MSG)

13 “Instead of honoring me, you profane me. You profane me when you say, ‘Worship is not important, and what we bring to worship is of no account,’ and when you say, ‘I’m bored—this doesn’t do anything for me.’ You act so superior, sticking your noses in the air—act superior to *me*, God-of-the-Angel-Armies! And when you do offer something to me, it’s a hand-me-down, or broken, or useless. Do you think I’m going to accept it? This is God speaking to you!

A. Do we “go through the motions” in our worship, or are we eager to be in the presence of the Creator of the Universe?

1. Paul explains this to the Church in Galatia:

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

2. Jesus says through John on Patmos, “you have left your first love”. Or better stated, “you have played aside the love and passion you had in the beginning.”

B. There is so much more about “us” that we can see in Malachi’s statements!

1. You see, when things are normal is when we must stay focused on the Lord more than when we struggle!
2. When we think we really do not need much from the Lord is when we need Him the most!
3. Do we treat Him like the “heavenly bell boy” or like the “center of the love of our lives?”
4. Do we want to focus on “ritual” and “what is authorized” or do we want to focus on the “lover of our souls” and be able to say like Paul:

Philippians 3:10-11 (MSG)

10-11 I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it.

