

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] I saw a cartoon of a cat. And the cat was doing what cat's usually do, which is sleeping. And someone comes up and asks the cat "What are you doing?" And the cat replies, "Nothing. I'm a cat. Cat's always do nothing." So the person asks, "When are you going to get up?" The cat replied, "I don't know. The hardest part of doing nothing is that you don't know when you are finished.
2. [Need] Apathy and doing nothing are adorable in cats. If you have a cat then you understand it is part of their charm and what makes them good pets. An apathetic cat can be a joy but an apathetic spiritual leader is a horror. Few things are more destructive to God's people than when their leaders are apathetic and do not do their jobs. Throughout Israel's history in the Bible we see story after story of the whole nation being led astray because of apathetic leaders.
3. [Subject] This morning we are going to look at chapter 2 of Malachi. In this chapter we will see God rebuke the apathetic priests. And we need to study in order to understand how dangerous spiritual apathy can be.
4. [Text] Malachi 2:1-16
5. [Preview] We will look at three people this morning. We will see the spiritual apathy of the priests, their effect on the people, and then we will conclude by looking at Jesus.

Point number 1: **The Priests are apathetic about their calling (v. 1-9).**
The Priests are apathetic about their calling (v. 1-9).

We saw some of this last week in chapter 1 where all of Israel was apathetic in their worship.

They were offering polluted sacrifices and the priests allowed it. In chapter 2 God focuses more on the priests apathy.

It seems like the priests are apathetic about their entire jobs. They really do not care at all about what God has called them to do. As a result, God rebukes them.

Verse 1, **"And now, O priest, this command is for you. 2 If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name,"**

Let's break this down.

First we see that the priests **"will not listen."**

They are not listening to God's voice.

They are not listening to His Word.

They are not obeying His commands.

The priests job is to listen to God and to teach they people to listen,

But they don't care.

They are also are not taking **"it to hear to give honor to my name."**

They are violating the 3rd commandment.

They above all people should honor God's name.

Their job is to teach people to honor God's name,

But they don't care.

And their apathy at their jobs has not gone unnoticed.

It is usually easy to tell if someone does not like their job isn't it?

If someone is just apathetic and doing the bare minumin?

How many of you would be happy to keep someone around who worked that way?

Wouldn't you discipline them in some way?

Or fire them?

Well, God has had enough of the priest's apathy.

The rest of verse 2 **"Says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart."**

God is going to curse them.

Now if they had listened, then this wouldn't surprise them.

Because every priest should know the curses of violating God's law.

You can find them in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.

The priests are supposed to know them frontward and backwards.
The curses are things like famine and being exiled out of the land.

And the curses are already happening.
Because of their disobedience.
But there are some specific parts of the curses God wants to mention.

Verse 3, **"Behold, I will rebuke your offspring,"**

The Hebrew word is "seed"

So this could be a curse of the seed of the land.

Which if you study Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26,

You will see that one of the curses is cursing the land so that the seed does not grow and the harvest is weak.

Or this could be God cursing the seed of their descendants.

Like the High Priest Eli in 1 Samuel.

He was an apathetic priest and God cursed both him and his sons.

I think God has both curses in mind here.

He will curse the land, the priests, and their sons.

But the rest of verse 3 is really gross.

Those of you who have dealt a lot with livestock might appreciate it.

"Behold I will rebuke your seed, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings and you shall be taken away with it."

Now in case you are grossed out by the Bible talking about dung,

I have some good news.

The word actually is not describing feces.

But I also have some bad news.

It's worse and more gross than you think.

The word describes the entrails, intestines, and all of the bodily waste.

All the good parts of the animals have been sacrificed and eaten.

The "dung" or leftovers are taken and burned outside of the camp.
How disgusting do you think that pile was?
Can you imagine the smell?
Would any of you want to even get close to it?
I wouldn't!

Well, God says that He is going to shove their faces in it.
God will pick up the grossest unclean parts and wipe it over their face.
There is a purpose behind it.
This is not just God being weird and gross.
Touching this would make them unclean.
Touching it would make them unable to serve as priests.
God does this so their outside appearance would make how unclean they are on the inside.

This should show you how repulsive God finds their actions.
Verse 4, **"So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts."**

God brings up the covenant He made with Levi.
In church we talk a lot about the Davidic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, and the Mosaic covenant.
But we don't talk a lot about the Levitical covenant.

The Levitical covenant is a covenant and promise God made with Levi.
The entire tribe was set apart for God.
And God declared their whole tribe would be called as priests for Israel.

You can read about this covenant being established in Numbers 25.
At that point and time the people had turned away from God to worship other gods and married worshippers of other gods.
But one man named Phinehas stood up and showed zeal for God's holiness and righteousness.

And because of His faithfulness God made a covenant with him.
That his descendants and the rest of the tribe of Levi would be priests forever.

Verse 5, **"My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name."**

Numbers 25:12 describes this covenant as a **"covenant of peace."**
Malachi is intentionally reminding these apathetic priests of their heritage.
He wants to remind them of the kind of priests that they should be.

They should be priest who fear God.
Priests who stand in awe of the name of God.

Verse 6 describes how faithful priest fulfilled their calling.
"True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips."

Priests are called to teach God's people.
But they do not get to teach whatever they want.
They do not get to teach what people want to hear.
They have to teach the truth.
Falseness, lies, vagueness, and deception should never be on their lips.

"He walked with me in peace and uprightness,"

The calling of a priest is to live with God.
To live a life filled with righteousness and peace.
They cannot simply teach about holiness, they have to be holy.
We have all seen spiritual leaders who could teach about God, but couldn't live it.

"and he turned many from iniquity."

The calling of a priest is to call people to repent.

It is turn them away from their sins and back to grace.
But these apathetic priests have turned to sin themselves.
And they are leading people in a parade of sin right towards judgement.

Verse 7 **"For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."**

Priests are called to be messengers of God.
They should teach the people how we are to live.
They are called to guard doctrine and theology.

But these apathetic priests have failed.

Verse 8, **"But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts,"**

The priests have failed in their calling.
Instead of turning away from their sin,
They have turned away from God.
They have turned away from the ancient paths of their faithful ancestors.

And the sin is causing the people to stumble.
They completely polluted and corrupted their covenant with God.

What will the consequences of this apathy be?

Verse 9 **"and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction."**

God will embarrass them as they have embarrassed God.
They will justly face punishment.
As much as they have deviated from their calling,
God will deviate in His blessing.

Malachi comes down hard on the priests and for good reason.
Those who lead God's people are held to a higher standard.
And the consequences of apathetic spiritual leaders is deadly.
We have all seen and felt the pain that comes from sinful leaders.

[transition] And apathy is contagious. Apathetic spiritual leaders will lead to people who are spiritually apathetic. Let's look at the consequences of the priests spiritual apathy.

Point number 2: **The people are apathetic about the covenant (v. 10-16). The people are apathetic about the covenant (v. 10-16).**

The priests do not care about their own calling.
They do not care about the Levitical covenant.
So, why should the people care about any of God's covenants?

This section begins by reminding them of the covenant.

Verse 10, **"Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?"**

God is their Father.
God is the God of their fathers.
God is the one who created them.
He fashioned them out of the dust.
He plucked their father Abraham out of obscurity and made him infamous.

This and more God their Father their Creator has done
And yet they are faithless.

Notice how Malachi frames his accusation.
He says this is something we have done.
He says that their entire nation corporately has been faithless not just to each other but to the covenant that they have made with God.

Verse 11, **"Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god."**

What is the faithless and abomination that Israel has committed?

They have married the daughters of foreign gods.

Throughout the Bible, the law warns against marrying other nations.

Some wrongly interpret this command as if God encouraged racism or nationalism.

But it had nothing to do with not mixing peoples, but with not mixing gods.

Because foreigners, refugees, and other nations were always invited into the people of God.

But they had to convert and leave their foreign gods behind.

Many of the women in Jesus' genealogy are such women.

But Israel has once again ignored this command.

They have married other women who have not come to worship God.

They are still worshipping their own gods.

This is why God is so angry.

Verse 12, **"May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!"**

God says that if you want foreign gods in your life so much, go.

God wants them to pack their bags and get out.

They are to leave the people of God.

They should not dare show up to worship.

He does want them to think they can worship God on the Sabbath and their idols during the week.

God wants all of their worship.

Verse 13, **"And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand."**

But God is not finished.

He has another problem with these apathetic people.

They are acting as if they don't understand what the problem is.

They weep and they cry and they throw themselves over the altar saying, "why isn't God blessing us?"

They dare to go around groaning.

They walk around telling people that they don't understand why God is allowing so much evil in the world and not listening to his people.

They are like someone who is openly having an affair.

And their spouse knows they are having an affair.

And then they complain to their spouse why they are giving them such a cold shoulder.

Verse 14, **"But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."**

God tells them exactly why He is not answering their prayers.

He tells them why their sacrifices are unacceptable.

It is because God saw what they did to their wives.

It is not enough that Israelites have been apathetic about the covenant.

It is not only because they married foreign women.

But they appear to have been married before.

God was a witness to their marriage vows.

And God sees that they have abandoned their previous wives.

They abandoned the women who were a part of the covenant.

God will not hear their worship because of how they wronged their wives.
1 Peter 3:7 says something similar.

God will not hear the prayers of husbands who abuse their wives.

God will not hear the prayers of husbands who mistreat their wives.

God will not hear the prayers of men who leave their wives for someone younger or any other ungodly unjust reason.

Verse 15 **"Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?"**

God reminds them that He is the one who made the marriage covenant.
Since Adam and Eve God has made each couple one.

He is the one who unites us, not some piece of paper at the courthouse.

But what is God after in marriage?

The rest of verse 15, **"And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring."**

The goal is that their marriage would result in holiness.

They would make each other holy.

Their children would grow to worship the God of Israel.

But their apathetic marriages are leading their offspring to worship other gods.

"So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

God does not want them to be so apathetic about the marriage covenant.

They are to be faithful.

They must guard themselves and their own marriages.

They must keep the promises they made before God.

And those who divorce and abandon their wives **“covers his garment with violence.”**

He uses this strong language because to divorce a woman at this time was to do violence to her.

It left her in a dangerous position and totally helpless.

Especially if she was an older woman.

Women were dependent on their family and men to survive.

Remember the story of Ruth and Naomi.

Of how difficult it was for them to survive.

And how miraculous it was that a righteous man cared for them.

So God condemns divorce partially because it is an act of violence against these women.

This does not mean that all divorce today is wrong.

There are good, even biblical reasons to get divorced.

Like if your spouse is abusive or sexually unfaithful.

But because you want to marry a younger woman who doesn't worship God is not a valid reason.

And God sees it.

This is a lot of talk about marriage.

I don't want you to miss the significance of this if you are single or widowed.

But this passage and their apathy is not just about the marriage covenant.

It is that they do not value their covenant to God.

And throughout the prophets their relationship to God is often described as a marriage covenant.

The prophets will use language of faithfulness and adultery.

Their promise to follow and obey God are like marriage vows.

The promises that they made to their spouses are significant because they are meant to reflect their own faithfulness to God.

The real problem is not that people are getting divorced,
It is not even that they are marrying foreign women who worship other gods.

The problem is that they are apathetic about their covenant with God.

They do not care about God's promises or demands.

They are doing whatever they want.

They are doing what makes them happy.

Then they will worship God when they get around to it.

But that is a problem.

And this is still a problem today.

The question for us today is will we be faithful?

Will we be faithful to God in our lives?

Do we care about His ways and His commands?

Do we follow His commands in our relationships whether we are married or not?

Or are we apathetic?

[transition] There is so much apathy everywhere. It is all over Israel in Malachi's day and it is all over our nation today. But what is our hope? Who can deliver us apathetic people and apathetic spiritual leaders? The answer is Jesus.

Point number 3: **Jesus is faithful in calling and covenant. Jesus is faithful in calling and covenant.**

What I want you to see is not a list of things that we must do and be.
Instead I want you to see what this passage tells us about Jesus.

First we see that Jesus is faithful in His calling.

He is nothing like these priests at all.

Jesus is not just a faithful priest, but He is better than any high priest.

And He fulfills this role faithfully and fully.

He always "**listened to God's command and took it to heart.**"

Even if it didn't make sense to His own disciples.

He gave honor to God's name.

He taught us to begin our prayers with honor for God's name.

Jesus always taught with "**true instruction.**"

He never lied or said anything wrong.

He did not teach the people to go astray,

but always taught them the truth.

And Not just the truth, but He never even misspoke.

He never accidentally said something wrong.

Jesus always "**walked with God in peace and righteousness.**"

He walked in peace even when the religious leaders walked in war and opposition.

He walked in peace and taught us to turn the other cheek.

He Himself turned the other cheek when He was slapped in the temple.

And when He was beaten half to death by the Romans.

He was silent when blindfolded and told to prophesy who hit Him.

And Jesus did "**turn many from iniquity.**"

Sinners loved to be around Jesus.

Prostitutes, tax collectors, and the demon possessed loved Him.

And it wasn't just because He was loving and kind.

There was something about Jesus that helped people turn from their sins.

The lips of Jesus "**preserved knowledge**" and the men always "**sought instruction from His mouth.**"

Crowds followed Jesus everywhere He went.

Because they recognized that His teaching was unlike the scribes.

His parables were nothing like the Pharisees.

He taught as one with authority and with Divine wisdom.

Unlike the priests and the people Jesus never "**turned aside from the path.**"

He did not turn aside when tempted in the desert.

He did not turn aside in the garden.

He followed God's path all the way to the cross that brought redemption.

And Jesus was made "**abased and despised before all the people.**"

Not as punishment for His own sins, but in punishment for ours.

He endured our punishment on the cross to bring us redemption.

He broke His naked body on the tree,

So that we could be remade.

His blood ran red,

That we would be washed white as snow.

Jesus was completely faithful in His calling.

And He still is faithful even now.

Right now Jesus fulfills His calling as our high priest.

He stands at the right hand of God in the throne of the heavens.

And there daily He intercedes and prays for us.

And He will be faithful to the end of the age and time.

Jesus is faithful in calling and in covenant.

The reason God takes marriage so seriously throughout the Bible is because it is a symbol of the gospel.

It is a symbol and reminder of God's relationship to His people.

I mentioned this before.

The prophets would describe Israel over and over as committing adultery.

The people of God are often an unfaithful spouse.

But Jesus remains faithful to the covenant.

Jesus is faithful to His promises.

Jesus is like a man who is faithful to His wife.

Even though she is committing adultery.

Even though she continues to have affairs even when confronted.
Even though she moves out of the house and does whatever she wants.
Even though everyone tells the man to just let the marriage die.
Even though everyone tells the man divorce is clearly justified.
Even though everyone tells the man to just move on.
He stays faithful to his vows.
Even though his wife does not.

That is like what Jesus does.
Even when the bride of Christ is unfaithful.
Even when we are apathetic.
Even when we give Jesus reason after reason to throw us away
Even when we give Jesus all the justification in the world to divorce us.
Jesus remains faithful.

Jesus promises to save us.
His salvation, His promises, His gospel, His redemption,
They do not depend on our faithfulness to the covenant.
They depend on His.

Our salvation does not depend on our works or merits.
Our salvation depends on the faithfulness of Jesus to save sinners.
When you hear the enemy whisper, "are you sure you are saved?"
Don't look at your own life for evidence.
Look to the faithfulness of Jesus.

"Because even when we are faithless, He is faithful. For He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:13

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] The priests are apathetic about their calling. The people are apathetic about the covenant. Jesus is faithful in calling and covenant.
2. [Challenge] Rest today in the faithfulness of Jesus, the ever faithful priest who is our only hope.