

**“Are You Jesus?”  
Malachi 3:16-18**

*A group of salesmen were returning home from a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night dinner. In their rush to catch the plane with tickets in hand and briefcases flailing one of the men inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane just in the nick of time.*

*All, that is, except one who paused, having experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned. He took a deep breath and then told his buddies to go on without him. As he waved goodbye he told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their destination and explain he was taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did.*

*The apple stand belonged to a 16 year old girl who was totally blind. She was crying softly, tears running down her cheeks in frustration while at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping to help her, no one caring about her plight.*

*The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table and helped organize her display. As he did, he noticed that many of the apples had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, “Here, please take this \$40 for the damage we did. Are you okay?” She nodded through her tears. He continued, “I hope we didn’t spoil your day too badly.”*

*As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, “Hey Mister...” He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, “Are you Jesus?” He stopped in mid stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: “Are you Jesus?”*

Throughout our study of Malachi we have heard God challenge his people away from mediocrity in their worship, service, and relationship with Him. He has called them to remember and recommit to the covenant which bound them to God as his people and he as their God. And,

God reminded them that the purpose of their covenant relationship was not merely about them, but about God and His desire that all the nations be blessed through them. For that reason, since forming them as a nation, God had said, “Be holy because I am holy” because in that holiness their relationship with one another would grow and the whole world could see and understand that they, too, can have a relationship with the true God. But, as the Israelites had experienced over and over again, unless they were committed 100% in their devotion to God, trusting solely in Him, and willing to be completely obedient they were prone to wander away from God.

By Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we, too, can have a covenant relationship with God. When we believe we become God’s children, redeemed from the slavery of sin, called to be holy, set apart for an awesome relationship with God, and called to show Jesus to the world. So we set out to be “good Christians” only to find that we can’t. As Joseph Garlingen has said, “The Christian life isn’t difficult – it’s impossible. If we don’t know that, we will try to do things ourselves. Faith is not when we think we can do it ourselves. Faith is when we realize we can’t.”

Throughout Malachi God has pointed out ways in which our commitment languishes, our devotion misaligns, and our lifestyle conforms to the world’s standards instead of God’s. We have been challenged. But if we take the challenge seriously then we also realize that we cannot live up to our own expectations, let alone God’s - which is exactly the point. Unless we are committed 100% in our devotion to God, trusting solely in Him, we will compromise our relationship with God and our witness to the world.

How do we stay totally committed to God, so we do not compromise, so we don’t fall into mediocrity, so nothing will come in between us and God? God tells us how (**read text**). God reveals three steps we can take to help us maintain our faithfulness.

1. *Fear the Lord.* The Hebrew word translated *fear* has two foci. First we need to trust. Even though we can't comprehend why; even though it seems as if those who don't follow God are being rewarded for it; even though it seems as if God is not around; even though our faith is weak and we know it – **don't stop trusting God.** Remember, God wants to bless you; God wants you to have abundant life. But remember also, what God values is not necessarily the same as what society values. **Trust God.** “*Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things (all that we need in this life) will be given to you as well*” (Mt.6:33), Jesus said.

The word translated fear also implies worship. **Start worshipping God.** So often when we realize we are not living up to the standards we've been given our initial response is to retreat further away. The first sin recorded finds Adam and Eve hiding, afraid. But our text implies that when we falter we should seek out God and worship him. Remember, God's accusations were not given to drive us away, but to restore us in our relationship with God through repentance and forgiveness. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to “go right into the presence of God with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean and our bodies have been washed with pure water” (10:22).

2. *Talk with each other.* Malachi tells us that those who “feared the Lord,” those who trusted and worshiped God began to discuss with each other what God had said (3:16). After calling us back into the presence of God, the writer of Hebrews gives similar instruction, “Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And, let us not neglect meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near” (10:24-25).

How often doesn't it take someone else to point out to us how God has blessed us? When we have our mind focused on ourselves and stuff instead of God, we can't see the forest of God's

blessing for the tree of our mistakes. When we gather with other believers we help each other see the bigger picture. We help each other remain focused on our Faithful God so we can remain faithful to God and to our witness.

3. *Write it down.* “A scroll of remembrance was written in [God’s] presence concerning those who trusted and worshiped God.” Some scholars have taken this to be the first reference in the Bible to the “Book of Life” in which the names of those who are saved are written. It may be, and what a wonderful thing it is to know that your name is written in the book of life.

But the text could also suggest a journaling of God’s blessings to the people of Israel. We can’t always be with others to help us remember the wonders of our God. Journaling, writing it down, is a way of preserving your praise to God. It also allows you to remember how God spoke to you today, or when a phone call from a friend lifted you up when you were down, or when God provided healing of body or soul, or of the blessing of a new grandchild, or the blessing of food or clothes or any number of other things God provided just when you needed them most. The list, you will find, goes on and on; all blessings from God.

Listen to the greatest blessing that results from trusting and worshipping God, talking with each other, and remembering the wonders of God: “*They will be mine. They are my special treasure.*” No more questions about whether or not we are good enough, have done enough, did it right enough. When all our hope and all our devotion and all our desire is focused on God, it’s not about us; it’s about God.

But look again, there’s more: “*You will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.*” When our focus is on God, our thoughts, desires, and actions follow. When you are committed to God it affects your very

being. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2Cor.5:17).  
There is a difference and you show it.

Do people mistake you for Jesus? If you are truly walking with God, you’re being watched. They’re comparing their lives with yours and seeing that you have something they are missing. They see contentment and peace. They see love and joy. They see the way you interact with your spouse and children. Then they look at their own lives and they know that you must have something special, because they have tried everything they can think of and their life doesn’t have it. We should be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with people in a world that is blind to God’s love, life and grace.

Hey mister. Hey lady. Are you Jesus?