

SERMON: FIRST GIVING HONOR TO GOD

Malachi 1:6a

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you.

Introduction

In all cultures and societies there are unwritten rules that are pervasive. If ignored out of ignorance or arrogance, there will be social repercussions. Sociologists call these unwritten rules “interaction rituals.” We get them by “social osmoses.” They are “caught,” not formally taught.

The traditional black church had many of these interaction rituals. One that immediately comes to mind is a phrase, the recitation of which was expected to be the first words out of the mouth of one speaking in church. The phrase as many of us know was, “First, giving honor to God, Who is the head of my life.” This phrase goes back to slavery, when our fore-parents had to sneak off in to the woods or by the rivers to “have church.” This phrase declared that God was honored by their Christian commitment and He was their top priority. It also declared that God, not the slave master, was in charge of their lives. They truly believed that God had the whole world in His hands.

This Scripture was read to the slaves by the slave masters in hope of making them docile and to squash rebellions. The slaves interpreted it in a totally different way. The slaves took it as a “proof text” of the requirement and privilege to honor God, their creator, with their whole being. While everyone was to be honored, God would get the highest honor. The preacher was honored, but God got the highest honor. No one came before God.

Of course, everyone that speaks in church today is not required to recite this ritualistic phrase, but the principle is sound.

Let us never become like the people to whom Malachi spoke against. They had ceased to honor God in every way. They had ignored His rules of conduct and His rules of sacrifice. They were keeping the best gifts for themselves and giving God the worst gifts. They dishonored God through blatant disobedience. Because of their selfish disobedience, there was approximately four hundred years between the close of the book of Malachi and the events recorded in the book of Matthew.

As we worship on this first Sunday in 2023, let us rededicate our commitment to honor God in all that we do. Let’s embrace the values of our fore-parents. Let’s look at a few of the ways we can and should honor God. I know I am preaching to the choir.

Exposition

1. We Honor God With Committed Stewardship.

(Time, Talent, and Treasure.)
(Proverbs 3:9-10; Colossians 3:17.)

2. We Honor God With Godly Decisions.

(Remember Joseph-He Decided To Support Mary.)
(Your Best Decision Does Not Compare To A Godly Decision.)

3. We Honor God By Demonstrating True Humility.

(Jesus Is The Perfect Example - Philippians 2:5-11.)

4. We Honor God By Honoring Others.

(Exodus 20:10; Romans 12:10; 1st Timothy 5:17; 1st Peter 3:7.)

5. We Honor God With Authentic Worship.

(In Spirit And In Truth - John 4:24.)
(Matthew 15:7-8.)

Closing Thoughts

I will close this sermon with another common phrase in the black oral tradition. It is the ending of a prayer.

“Lord, when it’s all over down here, please, give me a home somewhere in your kingdom. There the wicked will cease from troubling and the Sabbath will have no end. Then, I can praise and honor you much mo’ better. Amen!”

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